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### By Clara Louise Burnham

IN APPLE-BLOSSOM TIME. Illustrated. HEARTS' HAVEN. Illustrated by Helen Mason Grose. INSTEAD OF THE THORN. With frontispiece. THE RIGHT TRACK. With frontispiece in color. THE GOLDEN DOG. Illustrated in color. THE INNER FLAME. With frontispiece in color. CLEVER BETSY. Illustrated. FLUTTERFLY. Illustrated. THE LEAVEN OF LOVE. With frontispiece in color. THE QUEST FLOWER. Illustrated. THE OPENED SHUTTERS. With frontispiece in color. JEWEL: A CHAPTER IN HER LIFE. Illustrated. JEWEL'S STORY BOOK. Illustrated. THE RIGHT PRINCESS. MISS PRITCHARD'S WEDDING TRIP. YOUNG MAIDS AND OLD. DEARLY BOUGHT. NO GENTLEMEN. A SANE LUNATIC. NEXT DOOR. THE MISTRESS OF BEECH KNOLL MISS BAGG'S SECRETARY. DR. LATIMER. SWEET CLOVER. A Romance of the White City. THE WISE WOMAN. MISS ARCHER ARCHER. A GREAT LOVE. A Novel. A WEST POINT WOOING, and Other Stories.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

### DEARLY BOUGHT

### A NOVEL

BY

### CLARA LOUISE BURNHAM

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG MAIDS AND OLD," "NEXT DOOR," "NO GENTLEMEN,"

"A SANE LUNATIC," ETC.

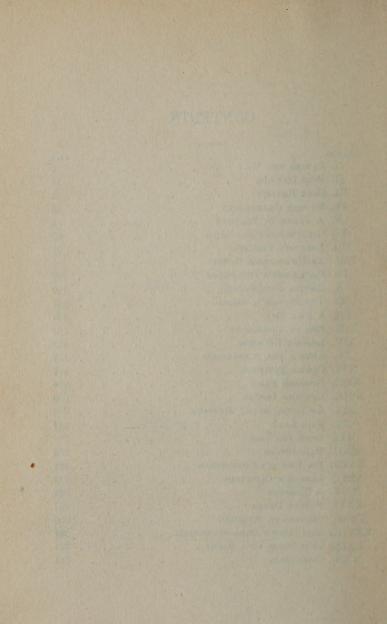


BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
(The Kilverside Press Cambridge

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# DEARLY BOUGHT.

#### CHAPTER I.

#### PAVING THE WAY.

"Since first I saw your face I resolved to honor and renown you!"

EPSY Nash would renounce the idea that she is "any great musicianer," were the matter inquired into; but it is simply impossible to keep silence on such a morning. Shining, sparkling, crystal morning, in quiet Alderley. The triple row of giant elms, making two drive-ways of the broad street, are hung with tender green foliage, spangled like the fresh turf from the recent rain, and now and then a sudden little shower shakes down on Miss Nash's wide-brimmed hat, as she drives her rattling wagon along beneath the spreading branches.

As was said, Hepsy does not pride herself particularly upon her singing; but when the perfumed morning steals in upon her senses, and moves her to join in its harmony, she settles her chin down close to her throat and bursts forth into song, with many a quaver, and a conscientious jerk of her head at every syllable.

"Since first I saw your face,
I resolved to honor and renown you:
(G'lang Tim!)

If now I be disdained,
I wish my heart had never known you.
What! I that loved, and you that liked,
Shall we begin to wrangle?

No, no, no,-

"Yes, yes, yes, rather," she continues, dropping into her speaking voice, and drawing on the left rein to turn Tim toward the sidewalk, while her shrewd eyes fasten upon a figure coming toward her. It is that of an old woman, short and inclining to stoutness, whose black eyes, as sharp as they are small, avoid Miss Nash's gaze, and whose sliding, sidewise gait accelerates at sight of the rustic figure in the wagon.

"Good mornin', Miss Belden," calls the latter with nasal nonchalance, "want any o' my wares this mornin'?"

"Nothing, I thank you," returns the other in smooth, precise voice, and glides by hastily.

Hepsy leans her hand on the back of the wagonseat and turns to look after her, laughing when she sees that a couple of rods farther on, Miss Belden is being compelled to stop by a young lady whom she meets on the walk.

"There, Miss Fortune's got hold of her," she soliloquizes. "Poor Miss Deborah! Seems if I could see her squirm way from here."

Miss Belden is in fact squirming and chafing restlessly, in the grasp of the fair-haired girl, who has captured her,—her contracting lips and uneasy motions bearing witness to her longings to escape. But Miss Fortune is a young woman constitutionally unable to entertain more than one idea at a time, and she proceeds to express with deliberate earnestness the thought uppermost in her mind.

"I'm so glad to have met you this morning, Miss Belden. I've called twice at Elmdale to find you, but in vain."

"Indeed? To what do I owe your kind but sudden interest?"—the inquiry in even and precise tones that contradict the expression of the speaker's face.

"Why, to your niece," returns the girl, feeling faintly uncomfortable, and uncertain of her ground." We hear you leave soon to go to meet her."

"I leave this evening, and am very much pressed for time; so if you will excuse me, I will go on. Good—"

"Must you nurry so?" interrupts the other, even grasping at Miss Deborah's faded shawl in her unwillingness to allow the old lady to escape without furnishing scraps of information for which she, in common with the whole feminine population of Alderley, is hungering.

"Unless you have some very particular business with me, I must; hoping you will excuse me."

"I wanted so much to ask a little about your niece."

"I presume you are as well informed about her as I am," responds the even voice.

"You don't know how interested everybody is," persists honest Miss Fortune.

"I think I do."

"Ma says I may call upon her as soon as ever sno arrives," says the girl, eagerly.

"Mrs. Fortune is too kind," remarks Miss Belden smoothly, with a wicked sparkle in her eyes. She feels that even her obtuse companion must see the sparkle, and quickly lowers her eyelids. "Good morning, Miss Fortune," she adds, and slides past her.

Hepsy Nash drives slowly up to where the young

lady still stands considering.

"What did you get for your pains?" she demands with quiet humor.

"O, good morning, Hepsy. What made you think I was trying to get anything? But I was. I was asking Miss Belden about her niece, and she couldn't or wouldn't talk about her. Have you heard that we are to have a real, convent-bred French girl among us? Miss Belden goes to New York this very night to meet her. Do you know anything at all about her? I hear you used to live at Elmdale?"

Miss Nash thoughtfully pushes a fly from Tim's back with the grey old whip, while the horse rubs his neck against a tree trunk.

"If I could write a romance," continues Miss Fortune in a burst of enthusiasm, "it would be laid at that delightful old place!"

"With Miss Belden for your he-roine, mebbe," suggests Hepsy. "Do you know about the romance that's ben lived there?"

"No; tell me, there's a clever creature! If anything exciting ever happened in Alderley I should like to know it."

"Something exciting happens most everywheres, sooner or later, I guess. Well, I lived as help at Elm-

dale from the time I was fourteen years old. The Squire in his prime, was a stern lookin' kind of a man, with a loud voice and a heavy step. His wife died when their little girl, Nora, was born, an' his sister Deborah lived with him as housekeeper. She was afraid of him, like everybody else, an' they never agreed very well. Even Nora was shy of her father, though he was n't never exactly severe to her. She was a happy disposition naturally, but her aunt was awful strict with her, an' she had the least liberty of any girl in the village. I could see she was lonely, an' restless, a good deal o' the time, but they neither on 'em noticed it. Truth is they noticed her so little, that when a French artist feller came strollin' through the town to sketch, an' somehow got acquainted with Nora, I seen before the old folks did how matters stood between 'em. He was a handsome chap, though awful dark complected, an' he used to wear a brown velvet sack coat that was exactly the color of his eyes. He made a sketch of the house that pleased the Squire, consid'able, an' just because the old man made a fuss over that, did n't the artist think the Squire'd be willin' to give him his daughter! He had the nerve to ask him for her, an' you better believe he got a thunderin' kind of an answer; but the next mornin' when we woke up, there was n't no Nora to be found. Yes, she had run off with Mr. Fayette. The Squire never got over it. Everybody noticed the change in him, but he was savager than ever an' nobody dared to name Nora before him. In five years afterward they got the news of her death, an' that

she had left a little girl. Upon that the old man had an awful run o' fever. But he come out of it, an' seemed as well as ever up to a year ago, when he had a stroke of parolysis. Then Miss Belden got the whip hand. Her brother was an invalid after that, an' could n't jaw so much as he had, an' I can tell you things began to change at Elmdale. The old lady cut down expenses right an' left. I was bound to see that the Squire had everything he liked, an' so she used to exhort me about the sin o' wastefulness an' luxury, an' finally she sent me off. 'Hepsy, I shan't need you no longer.' She said it as cool as though I'd ben there a week on trial, instead o' two-thirds of my life. Of course I did n't wait to be told twice, but the Squire sent for me before I went, and he says to me, - Miss Belden was standin' by, as stiff as a grey stone image - 'Hepsy,' says he, 'I've left directions with my sister to send for my grandchild and bring her up here in the old home. I hope you will be her friend.' I seen how anxious the old man looked, I knew he would n't trust,"- here Hepsy arrests herself, and gives a side glance at her listener. "Well, anyway he wanted to make a kind of a witness o' me. Miss Belden got red in the face as he spoke, but she kep' her eyes fixed down on the carpet. I told him I'd do my best, an' then he shook hands with me, an' I went. This is the first time I've spoke on this subject since it all happened."

"It is very interesting." Miss Fortune has scarcely winked during the recital, and now brings her plump hands together in an earnest gesture. "The Squire died two months ago" — ("Nearly three," corrects Miss Fortune.)

"Yes, three, an' I've had my eye on the old lady ever since, to make sure she done what she ought to."

"As if she would n't!" exclaims the girl reproachfully. Hepsy frowns and bites her lip with a gesture of vexation.

"Of course she would," she asserts, recovering herself, then adds with a short laugh: "You can't expect me to be over-charitable to Miss Belden after she gave me my walkin' ticket. Now why do you s'pose I've told you all this?"

"I don't know."

"Just so's you'd take an interest in that girl when she come."

"I took the greatest interest before. Even before I knew her mother's story I thought it would be just like meeting somebody in a book to meet her. Everybody is taking an interest."

"Yes," replies Hepsy, with a scornful grimace; "most o' their interest is just mere curiosity."

"I think so too," chimes in Miss Fortune. "Why, Hepsy, to hear some of ma's friends talk, you'd think it was Miss Fayette's fault that she has been to school at a convent. And some say she is on the point of taking the veil. Why, even ma looks sort of dubious about her. I had to tease and tease before she would promise that I might call on her. Ma was always one of the careful, particular kind, and now since we have lost our money, and she has been keeping house for Mrs. Saltonstall, she seems to think she must be

twice as careful as before. I don't see why people need be so suspicious, and doubt people beforehand."

"That's right; you go ahead an' be friendly to that poor, strange girl, even if she's homely as a mud fence an' has n't a thing to recommend her. I aint in a position to do her a mite o' good. Truth is, if I got a chance to favor her any, 'twould only make her aunt mad. She hates me because—"

"Don't use such an expression about Miss Belden," says Miss Fortune reprovingly; "A Christian and a member of the church knows better than to hate."

"That's a fact, that's a fact," responds Miss Nash hastily, picking up the whip as though she would like to lay it across her own shoulders. "I'm a reg'lar gas-bag to-day, some how. But you know when any one's had their pride hurt, they're apt to be uncharitable. Do you think your ma wants anythin' o' me, to-day?"

"She may; I don't know You might call before you go home."

"The folks have n't come back yet?"

"No. We don't expect them for another week, and even then I hardly think the workmen will be out of the house. They are frescoing still in the parlor."

"Which do you like best—the winter, when you have the house to yourselves, or the summer, when the Saltonstalls are here?"

"I think ma is full as happy when we are by our selves; but I rather like to see the ladies going in and out. They have only been in the house one month since we came, you know. Well, good morn-

ing, Hepsy. Ma will think I am a long time doing my errands."

"Good mornin'," responds Hepsy, slapping the horse with the reins; "G'lang, Tim."

But all the morning, as she makes her round of calls, leaving crisp, fresh vegetables here, and cream there,—the products of her thrifty little farm,—she is occupied in speculations concerning the orphan stranger whose coming is making such a stir in the quiet village. Hepsy's old maiden heart yearns over the young maiden, and as she turns Tim's head homeward, she shakes her own and sighs.

"All is, I hope she looks like Nora. I used to think Nora found a soft spot in her aunt's heart. Heart! The old woman's got a stone covered over smooth with satin in place of a heart—an' 'taint bigger'n a pea at that—but the most o' folks don't go any deeper than the satin cover, an' p'raps the new girl, if she only has light hair an' blue eyes like her ma, will get along, an' admire to hear her aunt hold forth at prayer-meetin' like the rest of 'em!" Here Hepsy brings down the whip over unsuspecting Tim, who starts forward in dismay at the undeserved assault.

"There, there, now, Tim, you see what a good Christian I be! Whoa, poor old feller! I s'pose you'll shake your head over that all the way home. Well, you aint the first that's had to shake their heads over my short-comin's. I've ben a hard case all my life. Don't say no more about it, Tim. I'll make it all right when we get up the hill. There, there, old boy!"

### CHAPTER II.

#### FAIR ILLUSION.

To is afternoon, and all is busy, happy excitement on the deck of the Sparta. Business men, coming home from recuperative trips, are taking their last full, care-free breaths before plunging again into the maëlstrom awaiting them beyond the hazy line which has been sighted as land. Young ladies look with longing eyes toward the field of their future triumphs, and think with satisfaction serene and sure of the Paris dresses and hats within their trunks. Foreigners gaze curiously toward the new world, while at least eleven assorted travelers contemplate, with or without pangs of conscience according to the moral status of each, the books they intend inditing on the subject of European travel.

Free from the horrors of sea-sickness, at the close of a fair and prosperous voyage, there are few grave, preoccupied faces among the throng. A young lady standing by the rail a little separate from her fellow-travelers wears one of these. Her arms are crossed listlessly, and she is the only one of the passengers who looks away from, rather than toward the clearing haze.

She is well-dressed, like the majority of American girls who come home from Europe; but one notices

her especially because she is so well-shaped and so exceedingly graceful. The manner in which her head is placed on her shoulders is so admirable as alone to seem accountable for the ease and beauty of her bearing, and that head is crowned with hair which has been remarked by every man, woman, and child on board the steamer. It is not red, nor brown, nor yellow, but inclines to the latter color, and is singularly sunny in effect.

She is Doris Gale, an independent young lady of fortune, and an object of envy to many.

"She may do and become anything she pleases!" said one enthusiastic acquaintance whom she met abroad; and Doris heard the words, and felt sick at heart.

A highly-strung, impulsive, conscientious girl she is, a very sad girl she looks as she stands there, taking no heed of the laughter and bustle around her, with that backward gaze over the water, as if she were regretting the past rather than anticipating the future. And it is true that she spends too much time in regret.

She has made one mistake already in her short life which she decides must embitter it henceforth. Courted, admired, rich, she stands in the world, with the better wealth of youth and health; but, in a moment of weakness and cowardice, she has taken a step for which remorse must always pursue her, and which cuts her off from the light-hearted enjoyment of these possessions. This description of the girl's mental state sounds melodramatic. One inclines to

feel impatient of another, externally so preëminently well-to-do as Doris, who permits some trouble to prey within, "like a worm i' the bud," and even indecorously to appear on the surface at short intervals. One feels skeptical of the reality of the trouble, and inclined to try heroic treatment for its dispersion.

At least, Mrs. Vance is so inclined, in this instance. Mrs. Vance is Miss Gale's chaperone, and she has been watching her charge covertly for some minutes past.

"I wonder if it would n't do that girl good if some one should shake her!" she says, half aloud.

Not that the speaker feels herself equal to administering such a tonic. She is a little afraid of Miss Gale; but she approaches her now, and lays a hand on one of the round, black-sleeved arms.

"There is only an hour or two left during which you will be under my jurisdiction, Miss Gale," she says, in a thin, pleasant voice. "I wonder if I dare say something to you which has been trembling on my lips for months."

The young woman turns around with a slight start. The paleness of her face is not the result either of the immediate surprise, or of protracted remorse. It is a clear, healthy whiteness, upon which color seldom infringes.

"How mysterious you are. Certainly, you may. Please speak at once;" and the ready response is so easy in its conventional politeness, that the elder lady feels bewildered, as she has often been before by a sudden change in the girl's mood. But she replies

with the manner of one whose courage has been summoned at some cost.

"Nothing mysterious is coming, my dear. Only you are an orphan, with neither brother nor sister, and I am very fond of you. I am not the first to avow a fondness for you; but at least you will acquit me of being a fortune-hunter. No, no, don't say anything. There are some who I know have made that confession to you, whom you could not have treated as you have, were it not that you suspected them of seeking your fortune before yourself."

The girl's eyes flash. "Mrs. Vance, you are inexcus—How many times must I beg you not to speak on that subject to me? Please do not continue."

The other draws back a little from the heat she has evoked, but continues hastily:

"Listen one minute. I must give you the word of general advice that has been on my tongue's end so long. It is this: Be happy!"

Doris breathes fast, and tears gather in her eyes.

"You have every reason to be so," continues her monitress. "You have health, youth, a fascination which is twice as valuable as actual beauty, beside certain claims to beauty itself. Why, the stewardess was telling me only yesterday that you are known all over the boat as the young lady with the hair! And then your money! I say it is dreadful!" finishes Mrs. Vance, incoherently.

"What, if you please?" questions Miss Gale, turning more fully toward the speaker, and facing her now with a steady look.

"Some months ago, you proposed to give my daughter and myself the pleasure of your company during our winter abroad. It took me only a short time to discover that you were not happy. Not happy! You! Then who should be? I have held my peace tolerably, I think. Only on two occasions, when you refused the finest specimens of your own countrymen, was I unable entirely to command myself; and then your language to me was strange in the extreme. Miss Gale, I'm afraid you are morbid!" Mrs. Vance hastens to soften the accusation so far as she conscientiously can. "You don't often display it, I admit. Your manner is all one could wish: but occasionally it shows, my dear. And what I want to warn you against, particularly, is letting such a spirit grow upon you; for it is growing upon you, and that particular feature of it which regards your love affairs, I do beg of you to watch. Remember your own attractions a little, and forget your fortune a great deal. Don't misunderstand me. Pray, don't misunderstand me. You are unusually alone in the world. It is vital, or nearly so, that you should marry. Try to look upon it in that light. If my daughter were left as you are, and fell into the fanciful notions you seem to entertain, I hope some one would talk to her as I am doing to you;" and Mrs. Vance closes her lips with an air of having freed her mind, and being willing to take the consequences of her temerity.

But Doris only looks back at her thoughtfully.

"Thank you," she says, simply. "I believe what you have said will do me good."

That is all; and it brings a comical expression of perplexity into her companion's face.

"Well, my dear, I will say that you have consistently surprised me every time you have spoken since we left New York. Are you sure that your belongings are all condensed and ready for shore?"

"Quite ready. I wonder how my little protegée is getting along. I believe I will look her up—after I have thanked you once more, Mrs. Vance," and Doris turns back with a bright and winning smile, an expression that matches the sunshine of her hair. "I do thank you for all your kindness of the past winter, not omitting the valedictory address."

"Last, but indeed not least," returns the lady, earnestly. "Only be guided by what I have just said, and count upon me at any time for counsel and companionship."

Miss Gale gives her friend's hand a kind pressure, but smiles as she walks away. Mrs. Vance has served an excellent purpose as companion on her runaway expedition, for so the girl styles her trip abroad; but now Doris hopes it is not ungrateful to feel that she shall not need her farther. The shrewd, shallow, worldly-wise, and good-natured woman has already become a part of her past.

"Why should I not be happy? Mrs. Vance is right," she thinks, in one of the revulsions of feeling in which her elastic youth sometimes revenges itself. "What good will it accomplish for me to grow morbid and disagreeable! And now for the poor little stranger."

The poor little stranger at the time Miss Gale reaches her is not a figure to make a severe draught upon any one's sympathy. She is standing on a pile of boxes, the better to see over the heads of the crowd, and she gives her handkerchief a wave around her head as Doris approaches.

"Hurrah for the red, white, and blue!" comes her subdued cry, while her dark eyes flash and her cheeks grow red with excitement.

"Thank you, in the name of my country," responds Doris.

"But it is my country as well. Of course I cheer at sight of it."

"Sit down, little patriot, and be reasonable. You cannot stand there until we land, no matter how inspired you may feel."

"Oh, amuse yourself with my fervor if you like," returns the other, jumping lightly down, and taking one of the many vacant seats; "but you had better look in the glass and see the enthusiasm that you are too proud to speak. It is easy to see that the sight of your native land inspires you as well."

The young girl speaks with an accent which is an added charm to her animated manner.

"Yes, I suppose I do look changed. I am 'being happy."

Miss Fayette looks at her with sudden gravity.

""Being happy.' That is not right, is it?" she questions quickly.

"I'm told so. I was ordered to be."

"No, no. I mean that is not the right way to say

it," repeats the girl, adhering to her question. "But you are only teasing! Americans always tease. At least those did who were at the convent; although they were very kind to me at the last. One girl, Mary Bonner, cried when I came away, and she trimmed this hat for me," and Lenore's eyes, the same dark, lustrous eyes that won Nora Belden's heart, look seriously for Doris' opinion of her head gear.

"Very becoming," says Doris, nodding.

"She was funny. She liked to be called Marie Bonheur."

"So should I," thinks Doris, "or anything else pronounced as prettily as that."

"But I would not do it," continues Lenore with a virtuous air. "I always called her Mary Bonner! I could not be too particular, you know; being five years in a French school, one can easily fall into some mistakes with the English, even when one starts knowing it well, and I have a horror of seeming foreign when I get home."

"You call it home, do you?"

"Oh, yes; I call it home," replies the girl, speaking with indescribable wistfulness, and fixing her companion with her large eyes. "I was born in America, you know," she adds eagerly, "and lived there always until five years ago."

"Without doubt you are a genuine American," says Miss Gale, finding it difficult to make the assertion gravely, in the face of the mobile, expressive eyebrows, and the thoroughly French mannerisms and gestures.

- "That is I was I was born in Canada," admits Lenore reluctantly.
  - "Not under our flag, then."
  - "Never mind. I am an American."
- "That is right. We are proud of you, I'm sure," laughs Doris. "But you have never been to this place where you are going now."
- "To Squire Belden's? To my grandfather's? Oh, no," replies Lenore, awfully. "He hated my father and me, you know—hated us; but he could not quite hate my mother, although he tried, and would never see her after she married my father. So after my dear mother, and my poor father had both left me, he sent money to have me put to school in France. He wanted the ocean between us."
  - "And yet you are going to see him now?"
- "Oh, he is dead, you know." It would be impossible to convey the cheerfulness and suddenness with which this fact is stated.
  - "Dear me," ejaculates Doris.
- "Yes, and I do not believe, Miss Gale," suddenly dropping into a mysterious tone, "that we should like to see him now. I told Mary Bonner about him at school, and she made n picture of him in a red suit with flames all around, and horns on his head, like this," and Lenore, clenching a hand beside each temple, sticks her forefingers straight up, and tries to look mephistophelean.

Miss Gale laughs as heartily as though remorse were a thing unheard of.

"But at the last, he left orders that I should be

sent for," adds Lenore with a sympathetic laugh, and shrug, "so here I am."

"Who is going to meet you? Who are you going to live with? What is going to happen to you?" asks Doris.

"My grand-aunt, Miss Belden," replies Lenore with simplicity. "She lives all alone, and shall I not be a comfort to her?"

"A great comfort, no doubt," assents the other, scrutinizing the *mignonne* face, like a creole's in its rich darkness of skin and eyes. "What do you expect to do in your new home?"

"Everything," replies Lenore, expansively. "Mary Bonner talked nonsense to tease me. She said she'd bet—American girls always say that, but you do not." Lenore interrupts herself to look curiously at her friend, then continues gravely with many a wag of her sleek little head. "She said she'd bet I would have to 'get up every morning with ye tuneful lark and get ye breakfast.' The idea!"

"The idea!" echoes Doris, laughing. "Absurd."

"It is not likely that my aunt would allow it," says Lenore with a pretty, dignified toss of her head.

"I think I know, perfectly, what she will be like," she continues, musingly. "Her letters—I have received two from her, are so fine; not loving, perhaps, but so refined and proper. I like proper people, do you not?"

Doris assents.

"Elmdale. That is the name of the place. It looks so grand at the head of the letters; and my

aunt, I am sure she is an elegant old lady with silver-white curls, and gold-rimmed eye-glasses," continues Lenore, warming to her subject, "who wears always black silk that rustles; and she will receive me with great dignity, which will all melt away when she finds she can love me. Ah! What it will be to have a real home!"

Doris looks sadly, enviously into the glowing face. "I hope you may realize all your anticipations," she says, kindly. "Is your aunt coming to meet you?"

"Yes; and for fear we might not recognize one another, she is to wear a red silk handkerchief, while I have this bit of artificial geranium in my buttonhole that she shall know me," and Lenore, smiling with child-like pleasure, pats the flower, gently. "You have been so kind to me, all the voyage," she says, looking up with sudden seriousness. "I wish to thank you so much before we part. Is it because you found me friendless — an orphan? Or have you found me"—she stops, blushing,—"I ask because the time comes so near when I shall see my aunt, and I am a little frightened of her; she may be too fine for me. Did you like me?" finishes Lenore courageously.

Miss Gale smiles. "Indeed I did."

"I am so glad," sighs Lenore, relieved. "My Aunt can not be finer than you."

"Then, too, I also am an orphan."

"But there is such a difference between a rich one and a poor one," remarks Lenore, wisely.

"You are the rich one of the two," returns Doris, impulsively.

Her companion looks puzzled, then troubled, then shy. "I wish I were rich enough to help you in some way," she says, timidly.

"Nobody can help me." The reply is nearly inaudible; then, seeing the distress in Lenore's soft eyes—
"If I knew just one little fact to be true, it would change the whole world to me."

"And can you not find out?"

"Yes, I could; but I shall not. Because I am n coward, Miss Fayette," she adds with forced gaiety, marveling at herself for actually having ultimated in speech the burdening thought that has been her companion throughout the long winter. This confiding, child-like young girl, with her courageous, cheerful hopes, and wholesome sphere, has unsealed her lips in spite of herself, and Doris feels comforted in the midst of her vexation, by the mere relief of speaking. "We shall probably never meet after to-day," she continues; "am I not very foolish to let you know just at the last that I am a coward?"

"I should never believe it, no matter how often you repeated it," says Lenore, quietly.

"I beg you to believe it!" exclaims Doris earnestly, even desperately. "You can not know—nobody knows how terrible it is to be a living cheat. To know one's self to be mean enough to—I believe I must be a little crazy to talk to you this way, Miss Fayette," she interrupts herself, rising, "ranting like the heroine of a third-rate novel. Please excuse me. I am a very common-place person in reality, so much so that I am hungry even in sight of New York har-

bor. I see Mrs. and Miss Vance over there. Let us join them."

Lenore rises obediently, hiding her amazement at her friend's strange behavior with instinctive tact, and talking with amusing volubility to Miss Vance, whose amazed glances, roving from her mother to Miss Gale, seem to request that one of the two should check the little foreigner and put her in her proper place. Mrs. Vance, however, beams graciously upon the offender. She has not seen her dear Miss Gale in such a merry mood since the day they sailed, and she gladly keeps Lenore by her side, all the time possible, until the hour comes to separate.

Then Lenore's eagerness hardly exceeds that of Doris as they look among the crowd for the red silk handkerchief. It comes at last—its rampant ends having worked around under Miss Belden's left ear as she turns hither and thither in search of her charge.

Not a majestic, aristocratic personage, Miss Belden. There is no tenderness in her wrinkled, anxious face. The silver threads in her faded, drab hair are scarcely discernible, while her steel-bowed spectacles bear as little resemblance to the elegant, gold-rimmed "nippers" as does her short, rusty alpaca to the black silk carriage costume of her niece's day-dreams.

The girl stares at her incredulously, as she peers right and left. Indeed so stunned does Lenore appear that Miss Gale takes it upon herself to come to the old lady's assistance.

"Is this Miss Belden?" she inquires courteously.

Miss Deborah clutches her by the arm so suddenly

as to make her start, and reaches up toward the fair face.

"I beg your pardon," the girl says coldly, drawing back.

"I beg yours," returns Miss Belden smoothly, almost cringingly. "I thought you might be my niece, for whom I am searching."

At this Lenore comes slowly forward, hanging back at every step like an unwilling child, the tell-tale flower glowing in her bosom, and her eyes, filled with a pleading expression, fixed on Miss Gale.

"Ah, here you are," continues Miss Belden, making the same business-like dive at her niece, and kissing her eye-brow. She speaks in a quiet voice, but with the same intonation she would use in claiming a trunk. Then she takes an instant's sharp survey of the dark, drooping face, but her own tells nothing. "Come, let us make haste," she says, and this is a remarkable speech for Miss Belden. She firmly believes the truth of the old adage that "Haste makes waste," but she is passing through an exciting and unusual experience now, and does not weigh words with her usual care. Lenore raises her eyes, and throws her arms impulsively about Doris' neck.

"I did not care about leaving you half an hour ago," she whispers, chokingly; "but now I do. Dear Miss Gale, thank you for everything, and I never will believe you are a cheat—or mean—excepting to yourself. Good-bye, good-bye."

"Good-bye." Doris' eyes are full as they gaze after the slight figure and its convoy, and she forgets

her surroundings until roused by an invitation from Mrs. Vance to accompany her home.

"No, I thank you, Mrs. Vance," she begins, bewildered, then the beautiful, admired Miss Gale feels painfully alone for a passing moment. "I am going to the Victoria for a few days," she finishes.

"At any rate," she thinks, as, later, with her maid beside her, she is being whirled along in a carriage through the crowded streets, "I believe I do not covet a Miss Belden. Poor little Lenore!"

### CHAPTER III.

GRIM REALITY.

DURING the hours that intervene between leaving the ship and arriving at Alderley station, Lenore takes many a furtive look at her stranger aunt.

Miss Belden has been too anxious and preoccupied by the unaccustomed cares incident to the journey to find time for words, up to the moment of leaving the cars; and her niece does not regret this. She can lean her head against the window sash, and look out upon the flying landscape, and so long as the figure beside her is silent, can carry on the pleasant, luxurious story of her imaginings. Little by little, with the aid of the furtive peeps before mentioned, she succeeds in raising her own spirits by hopeful resolutions to change — not herself, but this unsatisfactory aunt. Through her lashes she surveys Miss Belden's dingy, old-fashioned garments, of nondescript color and cut, with wondering disfavor.

"Poor thing — she has lived always with that monster, my grandfather!" she thinks, at last. "How should she have either taste or ambition? I will help her to be so different." And as these commiserating, protective thoughts are waxing warm within her, the girl is startled by the panic-stricken jump with which Miss Deborah springs to her feet, when the brakeman shouts "ALDERLEY!"

"Where is Saunders?" is Miss Belden's anxious inquiry, as she walks up and down the platform. "Oh, there you are," catching sight of the long, lank driver of a depot hack. "This young lady has a trunk—it is a very small trunk, is it not, Lenore?" turning to the girl, with a sharp look. "A very light trunk, I think."

"'T won't make no difference about the heft on't," remarks the man, slowly, fixing curious eyes on Lenore, whose fame has preceded her, even to the ears of this factorum.

"That is very strange, Saunders," returns Miss Belden, severely. "However, I believe there is no extra charge for passengers when you carry a trunk."

"Not a nickel," replies Saunders, grinning, and holding out his hand for the check, which Miss Deborah gives him, and then precedes Lenore into the carriage.

"I will take care of your purse for you," she pursues, "until we get home, and even longer if you wish. There is considerable money in it, and of course a foreigner like you hardly—"

"Ah—I am not a foreigner!" exclaims Lenore, facing her aunt with flushing cheeks.

Miss Belden's small, sly eyes move slowly around until they meet the girl's frank look.

"I thought you were," she says, quietly. "You have lived all your life among the French, have you not?"

"Yes, but-"

"And have spent the last five years in France."

"Yes, but I associated altogether with American girls. You can perceive it by the way I speak. I speak very well, do I not?"

The sweet, wistful face! Miss Belden's square countenance looks flabbier and more wrinkled than ever as her eyes fall before it.

"You speak so as to be understood. That is enough. Just now you had better fix your mind on the landscape, rather than on your own accomplishments. It is not every day that you will see Alderley out of a carriage window."

For by this time Saunders has his deliberate horses under way.

"Ah, do you not often drive?" asks Lenore, politely.
"Often drive!" Miss Belden repeats the words at
a higher pitch than is usual with her, and color steals
faintly into her face as she suddenly turns toward the
girl. "It seems that I have not made myself clear.
I am poor. Very poor. Do you understand me now?
I have barely enough to live upon. You, perhaps, are
able to indulge in the luxuries of life."

Lenore raises her eyebrows, and shrugs her shoulders.

"I do not see what you can possibly mean by that," she says, unabashed. "You know perfectly well that the money I gave you last night, in New York, is all I have in the world."

Then silence falls between them until the carriage turns into a wide gateway, and rolls toward a low,

stone mansion, at the first sight of which Lenore's hands, lying in her lap, clasp together, suddenly, and her eyes fill with tears.

It is solid, rather than handsome, the old Belden homestead, and an air of respectable exclusiveness pervades it. Long stretches of green sward lie between the house and the street; but where once were velvety lawns and smooth terraces, now the grass lies in long, rank luxuriance, undisturbed by lawn-mower or scythe. Only the fine old elms, for which the place is noted, rise superior to fluctuations of fortune, and their drooping branches, embowering the old mansion close and closer, sweep its walls with their green leaves and whisper of departed grandeur which only they and the grey stones remember.

Lenore sighs softly and turns her moist eyes toward her silent companion.

"This is where my mother was born, and here, in these very grounds, is where she used to play."

No response on the part of Miss Deborah. The girl looks back to the more sympathetic stone-work.

"And my father drifted here to sketch, and she loved his beaux yeux. Oh, my mother! Aunt Deborah, it is a dreadful thing when a girl deserts home and all those whose love she has tried for a stranger,—a dreadful thing!"

"You think so?" says Miss Belden.

The carriage stops, and she alights and goes up the siazza steps.

Lenore follows, and her Aunt, taking a key from the depths of her pocket, where it must have proved a heavy weight, fits it into the door. "Why, where — where are the servants?" asks Lenore, struck by the closed and deserted appearance of her future home.

Miss Belden smiles disagreeably. "Here is your servant, Miss Fayette," she replies, rapping herself on the breast. "This way, Saunders," and the man follows her up stairs with the trunk on his shoulder.

Lenore, left alone in the dim, wide hall, where the sweet air has not penetrated for days, feels a strange chill—not precisely of apprehension, but of loneliness and awe. She half fears that the furious, red-faced grandfather of her imagination may open the low, dark door and confront her.

"But he sent for me," she says aloud; then a happier fancy comes to her aid. "Those are the stairs where my little child-mother used to come down, one step at a time, holding fast to the banister; and what did she do when she was down? I wonder if she dared go into the drawing-room? I do not," but even as she speaks Lenore gently opens the door leading out of the hall, and finds herself in a wide, long, lowceiled room, meagrely furnished with faded, slimlegged furniture, and a long mirror at one end, whose tarnished, open-work frame, is shrouded in tarletan, as are also the frames of the vague old pictures. Only two of these possess an interest for Lenore, and they are tolerably distinct portraits; one of a stern-looking man, in a high stock, from whose frowning eves she turns away toward the full-length figure of a blonde girl of twelve.

"My pretty little mother," she murmurs fondly,

gazing up at it. After a minute she turns to the mirror. Big brown eyes set in a dark face, a small mouth, and a bewitching nez retroussé are what she sees. "No, no one would ever dream that I am a Belden," she says aloud.

"No one," echoes another voice, and Lenore sees Miss Belden looking over her shoulder. "There are no pug-noses among the Beldens."

The girl looks, with crimsoning cheeks, into the face of the other reflection for a moment, then turns and confronts her relative, who can not or will not meet her grave, questioning gaze.

"Why have you sent for me, Aunt Deborah?" she asks bluntly, and yet not rudely.

"Pray what would have become of you had I not?"

"Oh, what will become of me now that you have!" exclaims Lenore, wringing her hands and breaking down with disconcerting suddenness, under the strain of the past twenty-four hours. "I supposed you loved me and you do not. I supposed you were able to care for me, but you are poor and I am a burden—" and here her sobs become irrepressible, and the slimlegged sofa trembles beneath them as she flings herself across it, burying her face from view.

Miss Belden, standing, regarding her with dismay, knows no more what to say or do than the lean, miauwing house-cat that rubs against her dress. Coaxing with her is a forgotten art; scolding an impolitic measure never resorted to. At best, speech is but silvern; silence, golden. Miss Belden decides to keep silence until the gradually lessening sobs cease,

and Lenore's languid head rests quietly against the antique arm of the sofa, hard as a bolt of iron.

"My niece," she says then, her little black eyes fixed on the carpet, and her attitude unchanging, "I am as much surprised as grieved at this uncalled-for outburst. It shows an inheritance of bad blood that a prospect of poverty can so appall you."

"Aunt Deborah-"

"Don't interrupt me, if you please. We are entire strangers to one another. It would be unreasonable in either of us to expect affection from the other under those conditions. You have been sent for to come and reside with the only relative of your misguided mother. It was my duty to invite you. It was your duty to accept the call. You would have preferred a gayer life than any you will find here. I should have preferred to pursue mine in the quiet solitude to which I have grown accustomed; but it was not to be. So far we have both acted according to the mandates of conscience."

Lenore has assumed an upright position, and, with rueful, tear-wet countenance, is staring down at the hem of her aunt's ugly black gown.

"Now it remains for us to pursue this course to the end."

"What end?" Lenore asks the question with momentary hopefulness.

"Death!" responds Miss Deborah, curtly.

"Death! You do not suppose that I am going to live with you until I die?" demands the girl, openly dismayed.

"So far as we know. And now, Lenore, I feel that duty calls me to remind you that beauty is but skin deep, and that you have very little of it. Therefore it would be a greater folly for you to pride yourself on what you have than for most young women."

This speech restores Lenore's drowned spirits to

high and dry land. She even laughs faintly.

"Thank you, Aunt Deborah. You must think me exceedingly pretty to warn me so early in our acquaintance."

"No, you are mistaken," returns the other, with her quiet, stealthy manner, unchanged. "I think you a very ordinary looking young person, with an unfortunately dark skin."

The young girl blushes hotly.

"The reason I warned you is because you flew into a passion at my casual remark on the shape of your nose. You have nothing to do with it. You did not make it."

Lenore's eyes are bright, but she is as quiet as her adversary.

"No, I did not make it," she replies, with a light shrug; "and if I had it to do over again, I am not certain that I should change it."

"Poor girl!" exclaims Miss Deborah; then, lifting her eyes, she adds, in a voice which Lenore is to learn well, "A brand, plucked from the burning!"

Through the remainder of that lugubrious evening, which is one Lenore never forgets, the girl's pride supports her. She is to sit through many a frugal meal at Elmdale, but never again does the gloom and

forbiddingness of the great dining-room strike upon her with the same sense of discomfort that she feels upon seeing for the first time the slim supply of tea and bread and butter, laid out on the folded square of table-cloth upon one end of the great mahogany table.

She endures the meal bravely, swallowing her tea in little, difficult gulps, and unconsciously winning a good mark from Miss Belden by her inability to make way with more than one of the tiny half slices of bread.

After supper come family prayers. Miss Deborah takes the Holy Book, puts on her steel-bowed spectacles, and reads, in a sonorous voice, one of the most violent of David's invectives against the enemy, and then offers up one of the prayers which have made her famous in certain circles.

Lenore endures it all; endures hearing herself called a child of sin, bred in a hot-bed of bigotry and iniquity, and held firmly in the snare of the evil one. She listens to it all, quietly, then takes her little kerosene lamp, and bids her aunt good night, with outward calm; but when she is locked in the wide, low-ceiled room which has been prepared for her, what a woful little figure it is that sinks down on the floor at the foot of the bed, that article of furniture being too high to reach but by careful climbing, and buries its face in its hands, and sobs and cries with the abandon of utter heart-sickness and homesickness. Lenore cries until the tears refuse to come. Then she sits a while, staring at the little circle of light made by her lamp, and thinking over her situa-

tion. Then, with sudden resolve, she rises to her feet, sets the lamp on a stand, takes writing materials from her trunk, and, drawing a chair near the feeble light, commences a letter in French, which translated into English, reads as follows:

# My very dear Mary:

You will wonder at my addressing you in this language so soon after resolving not to write you a single French letter; but I have concluded that the French is a very good language. I am positive that it is never put to such ugly uses as the English. For to-night, at least, I have a tenderness for all that is French, and surely I have earned the right to grant myself a little indulgence.

What will be your surprise to learn that Elmdale is a grim, dark, repulsive house. To make it endurable it ought to be presided over by a suave, charming enchantress. Shall I introduce you to my aunt? No, I will not do that without telling you first what she is like, for it would not be fair to you. You know how delightful my anticipations of her were. Well,

[Here the writer changes her mind abruptly, and begins writing in English.]

She is a short, fat, wrinkled fright [how rapidly Lenore's pen scratches here], dressed like a scarecrow, with little black eyes like gimlets, and a hooked nose. She talks nearly all the time of Christianity and duty, except when she is saying cruel, CRUEL things to me; and yet her voice is so quiet, and she is so odd and strange, sometimes I doubt if she knows that she is unkind. Perhaps she really means to be a good woman.

I laid down the pen here, and looked at that last sentence, almost overcome by my own magnanimity. I must be nearly an angel to be able to write it after such a day as I have passed. Such a day, Mary! One minute,—it was when she was saying that she thought me very plain, and you know that with my eyes I could not be plain,—I thought I would strike her, just once, and then run away. A wild idea rushed through my

mind of hunting for your relatives and casting myself on their protection. But how could I find them? I gave that up instantly, and so instead of slapping Aunt Deborah, I drove two of my fingers through the old brocade covering of her sofa. I did not mean to do it, of course.

I wonder where your people live, and whether they would befriend me if I should grow desperate. Aunt Deborah said I was to live with her until I die. Until she dies, perhaps; but if she lives too long I think I shall have to marry somebody. I remember how you laughed when I asked you if American young men were more willing than French ones to marry a girl without a sou. You answered that there was not so much said about a young girl's dot in America, but that the young men kept up a terrible thinking! Ah, well, I should only marry as a last resort. My precious mother married once too often, and her daughter in the same dismal surroundings may be driven to follow her example.

It is a lovely moonlight night. I think I shall not be able to sleep at all —

Here Lenore looks up toward an uncurtained window, through which the soft light falls in rays through the shutters. She drops her pen, rises, and pushes back the blinds, kneeling before the open window, with her elbow resting on the sill. It is nearly midnight, already. A full hour slipped away while she was crying at the foot of the bed. The oil in the small lamp has burned low—an extravagance which the girl cannot fail to hear from, to-morrow. She leans her head out and looks about the ill-kept grounds, where every blemish is softened or removed. The giant elms cast deep shadows, and wave noiselessly in the night breeze; one friendly branch is so near that Lenore can grasp it, and she does so, holding the tender young leaves in her hot little palm, with

a sense of comfort in their coolness. A sound of wheels and of swift horses' hoofs breaks the silence, increases, and dies away again.

"I should like to be in that carriage," thinks the girl; "and to go, go, go, for a full week without stopping, and never, never see this place again. Who can be driving at this hour of the night in such a sleepy little village? Do people ever return from parties, here? I wonder if Aunt Deborah ever gives a party."

This conjecture is so preposterous that Lenore finds herself laughing, and then yawning.

"I might as well go to bed," she thinks; "if only I had a ladder to reach it," with a dubious glance at the ancient piece of furniture.

Lenore is eighteen, and so it goes without saying that, in spite of her troubles, she sleeps soundly. Her first thought in the morning is vexation with herself for waking so early in a place where there is nothing to wake for. Her second, to realize that there is some one in the room beside herself. She remembers unlocking the door the night before, previous to getting into bed, and, winking her sleepy eyes, she finally perceives her aunt, who is grasping the foot-board of the bed, as though for support, and standing with her face averted.

"Aunt — Aunt Deborah," Lenore says, indistinctly, and Miss Belden turns toward her, her countenance nearly purple in hue, and her eyes half closed.

"It is time to get up," she says, huskily, and Lenore notices that her breath is labored. "I called you at the door and got no answer, so I came in. I wish you to form the habit of rising early."

"Yes, Aunt," replies the girl, mechanically, watching her visitor as she relinquishes her hold on the bedstead, and goes unsteadily out.

"How ill she must be—poor woman! I wish I could do something to help her," thinks Lenore, springing out of bed. "She looked really like one with the apoplexy. Was that not what carried cff my grandfather? I believe it was." Here her eye falls upon the letter left forgotten upon the table. "Ah, Ciel!" she exclaims, pouncing upon it, and eagerly reading a few lines. It is as she has suspected. The page whereon Miss Belden is graphically described is lying uppermost.

"Aunt Deborah has read that, and it came near throwing her into a fit. Now what is to be done?" Lenore demands this of the strutting cockerels, with tails like birds of paradise, which adorn the paper on the wall. "Nothing; it cannot be helped," she replies to herself, philosophically, after waiting in vain for other answer. "It is all true, every word of it. Nevertheless, I will not send that letter yet. Mary Bonner may as well think that I am as happily situated as I expected to be," and Lenore, who feels more courageous with the bright, sunshiny morning, tears in pieces the writing that it was such a relief to her to set down. "It is all pretty bad, and my aunt is in a fury; nevertheless, one cannot wish one's self dead on such a morning," she reflects, leaning out of the window and taking a draught of the fragrant air, preparatory to presenting herself below stairs.

## CHAPTER IV.

#### BY THE GREENHOUSE.

DURING the days that follow there is a decorous rush to Elmdale. Arrayed in best bib and tucker, otherwise well-preserved silks and good old lace, do Miss Belden's dear five hundred come to call on her niece. From Miss Deborah's sphinx-like face, no one is ever to learn her own opinion of the young girl, and no one may perceive that she notices the fact that but one young lady, and she Miss Fortune; the daughter of Mrs. Saltonstall's housekeeper, is numbered among the visitors. But Miss Belden feels it, resents it, and writhes more than ever beneath herburden.

As for Lenore, she never realized before that there were so many old women in the world. How weary she becomes of being stared at by the multiplying throng, and of hearing her convent experience remarked upon.

"I think your grandfather ordered your education in a strangely mistaken spirit," says one guest, her eyes fixed on a gold cross that hangs about Lenore's neck; "I can only hope that you will forget all that the nuns taught you of religion, as quickly as possible."

"You wish me evil, Madame," responds Lenore,

promptly, looking back at her with a fixity which quite discountenances the visitor, who casts a glance of commiseration across at Miss Belden; but that lady, with wooden imperturbability, declines to acknowledge it.

In vain Lenore seeks among all these new faces for one which invites her confidence. She is becoming terribly lonely, and the growing sensation of solitude weighs upon her joyous spirit. What a life this new one is! With what innocent, glad enthusiasm she has anticipated it, and now, behold her! Deborah Belden is a hard, silent woman, whose days are spent in fighting and excluding sunlight, and in scouring windows and woodwork already clean. "A tremendous worker," her friends say, admiringly, and truly Lenore finds her so. It is a bewildering, hopeless task to try to assist her. The quips and quirls of her laborious housekeeping are a bewildering labyrinth to her niece, and let the girl, with the best intention, try to put her shoulder to the wheel, the effort is sure to end in quietly cutting words on the one side, and on the other, hot, angry blushes, and a flight to the sweet, unkempt outdoors, that is always ready to receive the stranger with unspoken sympathy.

A little bed of scarlet geraniums which she has found in the grounds, is literally the bright spot in life to Lenore in these days. It lies near a busy, whispering brook that hurries past what was once a greenhouse, but now is a mere wreck which the lavish woodbine clothes with beauty. When the girl first discovered her favorite flowers, they were meagre,

straggling plants; but two weeks of her care, under the blessed sunshine, led the struggling, stunted life into prosperous blossoming.

To these dumb friends the child's full heart often overflows. She tells them when Aunt Deborah has been especially trying, which she often is. She tells them when she is hungry, which, alas, she often is, Miss Belden apparently thinking that what is enough for one will do for two; and many are the castles-in-the-air which Lenore dreams out, lying on the grass beside them, with her dusky, wide-open eyes fixed upon the sky.

"I am glad I came to you, dear little ones," she says one morning, bending over the bed. "If there were any one to care for me as I have cared for you, I should respond as quickly; but while you are unfolding, I am contracting. I can see it in my glass, I can feel it in my heart. I have no right anywhere," and the dark head sinks against a rickety garden-seat, while great, despairing tears roll down the rounded cheeks.

At this moment, a few rods away, and separated from the weeping girl only by the greenhouse, a young man comes strolling through the grounds. He is tall and well made, but thin, and with an expression of weariness and *ennui* in his face. As he rounds the end of the mound of woodbine and discovers Lenore, this expression changes to one of curiosity and comparative cheerfulness, as though he were moved with gratitude at having something to wonder about.

He contracts his eyelids, as he approaches, and

drawing conveniently near, adjusts a pair of eyeglasses and stands, with his hands crossed behind him, surveying the thick, black braid that hangs dejectedly down Lenore's back.

Feeling his presence, in a moment the girl looks up and meets his gaze. A young man, a handsome man at that, studying her grief! She starts violently, and exclaims.

This personage is respectable, there is no doubting that. Can his odd conduct be one of the strange national customs, descriptions of which, on the lips of her American schoolmates, have so often enchained her interest?

"What is it, sir? What do you wish?" she inquires, not severely, and in her very best English, furtively wiping the tear-stains from her cheeks.

"I wanted to see Miss Belden," replies the new-comer, raising his hat and speaking in a slow, pleasant voice. "Have I the pleasure—"

"No, indeed!" The brusque reply enhances the cheerfulness of the young man's countenance. "Beside, it would not be a pleasure," adds Lenore in the interests of truth.

"I think myself I might go farther and fare worse," he says, smiling down into the dark eyes in a manner which is doubtless reprehensible under the circumstances, but which is as grateful to Lenore as dew to a parched flower.

"I suppose you ought to go away," she says—she does not know how wistfully.

"I think not. Misery loves company. I am miser-

able, and if I am not mistaken you were miserable a moment ago, when I came up. You looked lonely, I fancied."

"Lonely!" repeats Lenore, vehemently, with an eloquent gesture. "I was thinking that I would welcome the sight of any human being who was not a critical old woman."

"Look at me, then," says the young man, gravely, cautiously testing the legs of the garden seat. "That is one charge before which I can lay my hand on my heart and plead—not guilty," and he gives the rustic sofa another slight shake.

"Fall upon it, way back, all at once," says Lenore, earnestly, "and I do not believe it will go down with you; but if you sit on the edge, you are lost."

"Accomplished!" ejaculates the other, as he carefully stretches his long legs. "Now," meeting Lenore's serious eyes, "will you not join me?"

"Ah, no. It would not hold another. Are you a friend of Aunt Deborah's? If you are, I did wrong to speak as I did a moment ago."

"Do not distress yourself. You have done no harm," is the vague reply.

"Perhaps it is not discreet in me to talk with you, but I am so destitute of friends," continues the girl, a little faltering in face and voice. "It suddenly occurred to me that if I spoke to you before you spoke to Aunt Deborah, it might be better, and more likely to lead to something. You look so pleasant," she adds explanatorily; and at the addition the young man becomes suddenly dissatisfied with himself.

He leans forward at the imminent peril of his equilibrium.

"I must not impose upon you. I suppose your Aunt Deborah to be Miss Belden. I have never met her, although I did come here to-day to see her on business."

Lenore's countenance falls visibly.

"But if you are destitute of friends, perhaps you will kindly make one of me. I am Alan Burley, Gentleman, also, for the present, Invalid. I have an intolerable amount of time on my hands. It will be charity if you will talk to me as you were about to do, and if there is any small particular in which I can be of use to you, you will be very kind to disclose it."

Lenore looks at him gratefully. It is a strange delight to be free from an atmosphere of criticism, and spontaneously her little history breaks from her.

Mr. Burley listens with entire attention and a growing interest in the young, mobile face. "This child would make her fortune on the stage," he thinks, watching her unconscious gestures, and alternate fire and pathos.

"So, in common with the great army, it is an independence you sigh for," he says, when she has finished. "I judge that you are French. You—"

The intense reproach in his companion's face arrests and disconcerts him.

"Oh, sir, do I speak so badly?" The deeply injured tone mystifies Burley.

"By no means. There is merely an accent. I was

only about to say that you might give lessons in your language, Miss —"

"Fayette," adds Lenore, too much chagrined to be elated by the suggestion. "So I might. It is strange I had not thought of that."

"I suspect you would find teaching a sore trial of patience."

"And do you think my patience could be tried more sorely than it is every day and hour?" exclaims the girl. "I shall do it," she continues, her naturally sanguine spirits rising. "I shall certainly try it. Thank you so much."

"It is almost a pity you are so young," observes the stranger, musingly.

"Ah, it is nothing. It is only because my hair is not dressed. See," and Lenore lifts her long braid and winds it skilfully around her head, holding it in position while eagerly watching the effect on her critic.

He wonders if it can be possible that she is quite single-minded, and unconscious of the strangeness of the situation. Apparently he might be one of the odious old women for all effect his comely manhood seems to exert on this young lady.

"And I shall behave so se-ri-ous-ly," adds Lenore, impressively. "You do not know. Then I shall come and pour out my impatience, or satisfaction, to my dear geraniums."

"You have no other flowers in your garden, I see."

" No. These are the ones I care most for."

"You are very fond of them?"

"They are all I have now." Lenore is standing, and looking lovingly down on the mass of color. She stoops and breaks a clustering blossom and fastens it in her dress.

"Your sentiment does not prevent you from destroying them, Miss Fayette. You can be cruel as well as kind," says Burley, watching her movements curiously.

"Destroying them," she echoes, turning upon him, her cheeks matching the scarlet bloom. "They do not feel it so. When it is time for me to leave them, they are all anxious to go with me. This one is the happiest among them, now," and she smoothes the satin leaves resting next her heart.

An obvious bit of flattery rises to Alan's lips, but the flushed, child-like face checks its utterance.

"No doubt you are right," he says, rather tamely. "It was stupid in me not to see it at once in that light. Do you suppose either of them yearns to go with me?"

"Oh, no," returns Lenore, with amusing sincerity; "no, indeed; but let me take you to my Aunt. Forgive me for detaining you so long."

But Burley shakes his head and consults his watch. "My chance for to-day has slipped. I must go back to the village to keep an engagement; but my business with Miss Belden will wait excellently."

"And I!—I am going to seek my fortune. That is n joke. Do you know the Fortunes?"

"No. I am a stranger in Alderley."

"They are a widow and her daughter. The daugh-

ter is the only young person who has called on me here—until you," adds Lenore, naïvely. "I feel a certainty that she and her mother will be my first pupils."

"Pleasant ones?"

"Ah!" replies Lenore, with raised eyebrows and shoulders. "The mother—she has no flesh, and the daughter—she has it all. O, monsieur—Mr. Burley, the daughter is so comical. She has round eyes—so—and a hook nose—so—," improvising with her first finger an added hook to her own diminutive feature; "and when she came to see me, she wore a bonnet of green feathers, and, O, she was just like a parrot, exactly a parrot," and Lenore laughs until she catches her breath.

"Let us hope she is," says Alan, laughing with her.
"She will learn quickly and do you credit; and now, instruct me how to get out of this man-trap without breaking it or myself."

"Just get up, very quick," says the girl, becoming suddenly grave before the importance of the subject.

"Ah, I comprehend," replies the young man, regaining his perpendicular. "In all emergencies this interesting relic needs to be taken by surprise in order not to become dangerous. Well, I hope I may be so fortunate as to astonish it on a future occasion. Thank you, Miss Fayette, for allowing me to while away an hour here."

Lenore holds out her hand and smiles with a resurrection of the brightness that vanished on the deck of the Sparta. "Thank you for giving me a suggestion. I feel that I owe you much."

"I hope it may prove so," and Alan Burley takes the hand with a kind pressure, and lifting his hat, walks away with a new interest in Alderley beyond the purity of its breezes.

## CHAPTER V.

#### A FREAK OF FORTUNE.

MISS GALE is standing at her window in the hotel, looking absently out into the street. Her room is well located and the cavalcade of gay equipages and people passing before her is calculated to cheer and amuse any well-regulated young lady of twenty-one. But Doris is present only in body. She is not even aware of the brilliant panorama of which she herself has just been forming a feature. Her carefully simple carriage costume of wine-colored velvet winds its long length about her as she stands, and the plumes of her hat hide, yet display by their rich color, the beauty of her hair. Whatever Doris Gale wears, be it blue, violet, red, or black, the hue of her apparel seems especially calculated to set off the glory of her hair. Such a sunshiny head to be so full of gloom this lovely day. Such a picturesque, bright exterior to be filled with anxiety and dread.

"And I used to think I had force of character," she muses, scornfully, "yet here I am, allowing myself to be worn to a shadow by this dreadful suspense which I could end so easily. What a slight thing it would be to do! A couple of tickets to Philadelphia. A couple of hours ride in the cars. A couple of questions at ——" here the girl's flushed face pales, and

a repugnant, fearful shudder passes over her. "To go alone! Perhaps to hear news that would crush me to the earth. How foolish I should be to run headlong into so much misery. As it is, I have every blessing but a home," and Miss Gale pushes her skeleton, frisking to-day with unusual vigor, back into its closet; but the rattling bones refuse to let the door close upon their unsightliness.

"How could I enjoy a home, even supposing I could make one, unless I knew for certain — Mary," calling resolutely to her maid, without turning her head, "please go out and buy two — wait: who is that?" as a carriage drives up to the sidewalk, "that surely is Miss Rachel Saltonstall and her mother!" The clouds are dispelled. A glad light suffuses her eager face. "They are coming in. Perhaps they are stopping here."

"I'm sure I'm very glad, Miss Gale, if they are," responds the comfortable, middle-aged woman, "for I'm certain you will enjoy seeing them."

"Indeed I shall; I wish I were as sure that they would enjoy seeing me."

"And why not?"

"O, I remind Mrs. Saltonstall so of her daughter Miriam," responds the girl, turning her bright face, at which Mary looks fondly, delighting in the new expression which befits the bright eyes and clear, youthful complexion.

"But it is two years since she died. Perhaps they will be willing to see me now. Take my hat, Mary, I am going to write a little note to Miss Rachel, which

you shall take to her if she is in the house, and I am quite sure she must be staying here;" and Miss Gale seats herself beside her table, while the door closes of itself, gently, on the skeleton.

Her surmise is correct. The Saltonstalls are staying in the house. They are discussing Mrs. Fortune as they reach their room.

"A very strange woman," comments Mrs. Saltonstall, as they remove their outer garments.

"A very energetic, prompt woman," returns the daughter, taking the black satin wrap from her mother's portly shoulders.

"That may all be," returns Mrs. Saltonstall, impatiently. "At the same time I never feel quite comfortable with her, Rachel?"

"No?" Miss Saltonstall is arranging a dainty cap of white lace on her mother's hair, and looking easily over the short, stout figure, into the glass to note the effect.

"No. I cannot help feeling conscious all the time that she was once as well off as myself and held as high a position as I do."

"Which is not high at all," laughs the younger woman, drawing up her own commanding figure and giving her mother an affectionate pat.

"Don't you have any of that feeling, Rachel? that queer feeling, don't you know, as though she thought it was our fault that she is in our service, but that she will do her duty by us nevertheless?" and Mrs. Saltonstall sinks deliberately into an easy-chair, rather fatigued by the unusual effort of formulating her thought.

"No, mother dear, I believe I do not. Don't worry your kind heart over that. You have been a very good friend to Mrs. Fortune, and I hardly think she misunderstands you."

"I declare I do not see why you want to go down there this summer at all," pursues Mrs. Saltonstall, fretfully, after a minute's thought. The idea of putting so much expense on that old house, when there is no one to see it."

"You forget Alan," replies the other, with the shadow of a smile, and a lovely light in her brown eyes.

"No, I do not forget Alan at all. I cannot see that hundreds of dollars worth of frescoing is going to help him to get well. I hope he is not quite a baby to need bright colors on the wall to amuse him."

Miss Saltonstall laughs in a happy way very pleasant to hear.

"According to you there will not be much else," she replies. "Come, dear little mother, I shall certainly quarrel with Mrs. Fortune if she is going to frighten you into disliking Alderley."

"Why, Rachel," with an access of energy, "what a ridiculous thing to say! Did I ever like Alderley, or say I did? Doesn't every one know that it is the stupidest place in the world? Your father liked it, and I solemnly believe that is the only reason you pretend to. Pooh! it is as much asleep as ever Rip Van Winkle was."

"Nevertheless it is very fortunate that we have a quiet place to ask Alan to," replies Rachel softly,

"the quieter the better, he said, and why need we complain if it suits him."

"Well, really," protests Mrs. Saltonstall indignantly, and so we are to be sacrificed for a great strapping fellow who is just as likely to get well in one place as another."

"Why, mother! Don't you love Alan?"

"Of course I do. Did you ever see a woman who didn't? But is that any reason—some one's knocking, Rachel," and Mrs. Saltonstall suddenly alters her mind as to the shedding of tears, and wipes her eyes quickly.

Miss Saltonstall goes to the door and returns with a note in her hand.

"What have you there, Rachel?"

"I will see," opening the paper, and reading:

Dear Miss Saltonstall:

I have just seen you and your mother from my window. I need not say how delighted I was to catch a glimpse of you, or how I should enjoy coming nearer; but if you do not feel like seeing me I shall understand it perfectly, and shall not be in the least hurt. Please send a reply to parlor———,

Yours very affectionately.

DORIS GALE.

"Mother it is Doris Gale!" repeats Rachel, slowly, and as the two look at one another, tears spring to their eyes and, though silent, their thoughts are alike occupied with the precious, vanished daughter and sister, with whom the writer of the note is indissolubly connected in the mind of each.

"I thought Doris was in Europe," says Rachel, breaking the silence and looking back to the sheet of

paper. "But it seems she has returned. How do you feel about seeing her?"

Mrs. Saltonstall, her eyes buried in her handker-

chief, lifts one hand entreatingly.

"We ought also to think of her side of it," continues the daughter in her even tones, so gentle yet so firm. "She has lost her mother, you know, and, although it is not probable, she may be lonely. She may mean more than she says in this note," and again she bends her head and studies its contents. "I think, mother," and little the speaker knows all that is involved in her decision, "I think we had better see Doris."

So Miss Gale is sent for, and comes. Mrs. Salton-stall bursts into heartfelt weeping at sight of the face which she never before looked upon without the accompaniment of that of her lost darling, and her warm embrace is grateful to Doris, while her sobs wring the girl's heart. She looks somewhat timidly at Rachel, with whom her acquaintance is slight, but whose goodness and graces were the ever-fresh theme of the bright, fairy-like, younger sister.

"I am very glad to see you, Doris," Miss Saltonstall says, when her mother's sobs have quieted.
"Your note was the first intimation I had received of your return. I suppose you passed a very delightful winter."

"We saw everything-yes."

"And was not that delightful?" smiling at the girl's hesitation.

"Yes, but I have no excuse to offer, only I am

gladder to be with you both here, than I ever was over there," says Doris naïvely, and impulsively.

"Darling child!" exclaims Mrs. Saltonstall, only half muffled now in her handkerchief. She has not liked to think about Doris since Miriam died. She certainly has not wished to see her. But now, finding the girl to be so lovely, she had forgotten how lovely, she feels quite a gush of affection, or admiration, for her, and imagines that she has been yearning for her companionship.

"You seem very near to us, certainly," she adds, wiping her eyes and gazing upon Doris, seated at her feet. "What are your plans, my dear?"

"I have no plans, I have one or two castles in the air," replies the girl. "You know," and her face grows pained and sad, "I have lost Dr. Reid."

"Yes, O yes, how sad that was—his sudden death. I remember. It was early in the winter, was it not?"

"Yes, soon after I sailed with Mrs. Vance." Her tone causes Rachel to look up. She is surprised at the expression in the speaker's face.

"Can Doris have loved Dr. Reid!" The thought fiashes through her mind before the girl speaks again.

"His loss was the greatest I could suffer," she continues with an effort. "Now, as I have no relatives, and no particular ties, it is hard for me to make up my mind just what I will do."

"Dear me—how very strange"—says Mrs. Saltonstall, casting a helpless, perplexed look at her daughter. "Is it not—quite dangerous for her, Rachel, under the circumstances?" "I dare say Doris feels well able to guard herself from danger," says Miss Saltonstall, smiling across at the lowly figure. "I presume mother is thinking of fortune-hunters."

"Partly," assents Mrs. Saltonstall, meditatively, smoothing the girl's velvet shoulder and taking a complacent delight in the quality and fit of the beautiful gown, "and then there are the charities. People will give you no rest unless you help them all, and what can you do without any older person to help you say no—or rather to tell you when to say no. But what are your castles in the air? I do hope nothing eccentric."

"No, I think not. I want a home more than anything. You know I have been a rolling stone ever since I left school, visiting and traveling with one and another school friend. You do not know, Miss Rachel," and the girl turns instinctively to the younger of her companions, "what it is to long to belong somewhere. Think how little I really know you, yet I feel nearer to being at home with you, than with anyone."

She speaks with a manner so winning, that Mrs. Saltonstall forgets all caution.

"Then stay with us," she cries impulsively, "as long ms you like. Why should n't she, Rachel?"

Miss Saltonstall raises her eyebrows and smiles.

"It would please me," she begins, courteously, but Doris shakes her head and colors. "I only said that to show you what a forlorn creature a rolling stone becomes," she replies hastily. "What I want is a home of my own."

"Of course. Every girl wishes and expects that," says Mrs. Saltonstall approvingly, "but until you are married —

"Don't!" exclaims Doris, shrinking back, and becoming very pale. "I shall never marry," she continues, quietly, biting her lips, "and whether or no I have a home will depend upon whether I could find a suitable housekeeper — a lady, yet —"

"Don't try that," groans Mrs. Saltonstall, shaking her head, and Rachel interrupts, seeing the opportunity to divert the conversation, which it is evident to her is painful to their guest.

"Doris, your note came just in time to prevent quite a serious family jar. Mother reminds me of it by that groan. She has installed an old-time acquaintance of hers as housekeeper at our home in Alderley, and as a consequence dreads to go there."

"Rachel, I wish you would not give so absurd and false an impression. I merely object, Doris, to burying ourselves alive at a very pleasant season of the year, with no object in view."

Its natural color is stealing back into Miss Gale's face, and she looks up with interest.

"Alderley! How much Miriam has talked to me of Alderley. It must be a very lovely place!"

After a moment's silence Mrs. Saltonstall replies in subdued voice, with a sigh:

"My children have pleasant associations with the place. It is natural, perhaps. I have no intention of seriously opposing Rachel, of course. We can go to the shore later in the season."

"Certainly, mother, and what would you do for fancy work there if Miss Fortune could not give you a hundred new ideas in the meantime? You must come down to Alderley some day, Doris, and see if it is not a sweet, quiet corner, to creep into occasionally."

"Why not this very season?" adds Mrs. Saltonstall, eagerly. "Come down with us now, next week, Doris. Why not? We will not be refused. If you agree with Rachel, you shall stay; if you agree with me that it is all very dull, you shall be free to leave at any minute."

Rachel Saltonstall watches gravely for the girl's answer. Doris is very fresh, and sweet, and attractive, but Rachel wants no stranger, this season of all seasons, in her paradise. However, it is evident that Doris has suffered—still suffers, from a great grief. She has admitted her loneliness, and fondness for themselves. Moreover, just now she is turning questioningly to Rachel for confirmation of her invitation, and the latter stifles her secret regrets and nods kindly.

"That is a fair offer, Doris. Will you not accept it?"

"Gladly; not quite so soon, perhaps, as you suggest; but you are both very kind. I shall be so glad to come," she replies, rising. "It has done me good to see you," she adds, warmly. "Thank you for everything. Please come to my room and visit me if you can find the time."

"What a lovely creature, Rachel!" says Mrs. Saltonstall, when the velvet train has swept from the room.

"She has grown dazzling," replies the daughter, quietly.

"So much style—such a perfect figure," continues Mrs. Saltonstall, "but how changeable her face is. I did not remember it so. I never saw a sadder expression than hers, nor one brighter, or more winning. Do you know, Rachel, stranger things have happened. I have known of several cases, myself, and she certainly acted like it. Did n't you think of it yourself?"

"What, mother?"

"Why, that she was in love with her guardian."

"I certainly did think of it. Dr. Reid was a lovely gentleman."

"But so fat," objects Mrs. Saltonstall.

"Love is blind, you know, and perhaps she did not see that he was fat; however, joking aside, it is plain to be seen that pretty Doris has had an unhappy affaire and we must be careful to keep away from subjects that might pain her."

"For mercy's sake, don't warn me then, Rachel. You ought to know by this time my penchant for talking on unfortunate subjects. No one knows it better that myself, yet I declare I cannot help it, and if I'm told not to speak of any particular thing, that particular thing fascinates me so I can't keep away from it; and now if you do not mind, dear, I'll take a little nap. Just draw that shade down about three inches. It has been rather an exciting day for me."

Rachel obeys, and then returns to her arm chair, where she leans her head back, and closes her eyes, not to sleep, but to dream, undisturbed, of the coming months, and the blessing they may bring to her.

### CHAPTER VI.

#### GINGERBREAD AND MILK.

HOW Miss Belden can find so much to occupy her in her super-neat kitchen is one of the unsolved enigmas in her niece's mind.

"It is not as though she ever cooked anything," remarks Lenore to her only confidente, the dark, large-eyed face, that raises its eyebrows at her from her quaint old-fashioned mirror, much tip-tilted in order at all to reflect her small person.

How still the house is while she ties on her broad hat. Miss Belden's stealthy stepping about is never audible, and, but for the rattle of an occasional tin pan, Lenore would believe herself entirely alone.

"Oh you solemn owl!" exclaims the girl, apostrophizing her own wistful eyes. "Not one girl in the school—not even Mary Bonner—would know you. What are you alive for, stupid? Ah, I know what would do you good. First, a grand dinner, beginning with soup and ending with sweet-meats and fruit and coffee, with a crowd of gay young people sitting about the table, among them Mr. Burley, and we would all talk and laugh at once, and make a great deal of noise. Then should follow a dance, and Mr. Burley, in that kind, pleasant, lazy way of his, would say—'Will you honor me, Miss Fayette!' Would I not? I would

make him dance until he ached in every limb if only there were good music—loud music, and plenty of it, and a great deal of light; bright, white electric light, that should make one forget that there was kerosene in the world. Lenore!" stopping herself in the midst of a wild, whirling waltz. "Do not intoxicate yourself and make it the harder to bear a hateful, dark house, still as the grave, and haunted by a vegetable—no, a vegetarian aunt, who thinks meat is too 'hearty.' Where are my gloves? And now allons!" She leaves her room with a skip, and goes down the stairs singing—

"' Colinette etait son nom,
Elle habitait un village.
Ou, l'été de mon jeune age,
J'allais passé le moisson.
Ce n'etait qu'une fillette,
Je n'etais qu'un ecolier;
Elle est morte en Fevrier
Pauvre Colinette!'"

Through the gloomy lower hall she passes, out through the dining-room and into the kitchen, where her aunt looks coldly up at her.

"I believe I have told you, Lenore, that I do not care for singing," she says. "In fact it annoys me."

"I do it for the good of your soul," is trembling on Lenore's saucy tongue, but she does not let the words go forth. She says nothing, only shrugs her shoulders.

"I heard quite a piece of news yesterday," pursues Miss Belden, pausing in the act of scouring the spotless sink, and lowering her eyelids after her covert fashion. "Nothing concerning me, I suppose," says Lenore, listlessly, drawing on her gloves.

"It concerns you or I should not mention it. It was not a pleasant thing to hear from a stranger."

The girl looks up with unfeigned curiosity. Her aunt's downcast lids tremble; but there is no sign of anger in her monotonous voice.

"I was informed yesterday that my niece has taken the position of teacher in the family of a servant."

"O Aunt Deborah, I am sorry you have found out about that!"

"Ah, you admit it do you? Then how dared you think you could carry on an enterprise of that kind unknown to me? Are you aware that I am a person of influence in this village, — that what concerns me is a matter of interest to a great many persons?" Over Miss Belden's face a deep red is stealing. "Never think to deceive me, whatever the low promptings of your nature may lead you to do!" Here she grasps the sink for support, and closes her eyes, breathing heavily. Lenore pushes a chair toward her, but does not touch her. Miss Belden refuses to avail herself of it.

"Aunt Deborah," the girl replies with feeling, "perhaps you also remember that yesterday you reminded me that I was a dependent. That was the expression you used—'a dependent.' When you can say such things so easily do you wonder that I should strive to be independent? My motive was not a bad one in trying to keep my teaching a secret from you for a time. I have but those two pupils—Mrs. For-

tune and her daughter — at present, and I hope for more. I meant to inform you as soon as I had gained a number of scholars." Miss Belden stands silent, with eyes closed, the dark hue of her face gradually paling. "Do you intend to forbid my teaching?" adds Lenore regarding her steadily.

"I intend to forbid your deceiving me. Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do. Doubtless your time might be worse spent than in teaching others to chatter your foolish language."

"There are no such hateful words in it as yours contains," retorts the girl, tears springing to her eyes.

"Beware of that evil temper of yours, Lenore Fayette. You were publicly prayed for by many good people last evening at meeting. I trust to see——"

"How did they dare do it!" exclaims Lenore passionately. "I dare say you were one. How could you have the heart!" She longs to burst into tears, but her pride restrains her.

"The heart? I hope I have the heart for that work," says Miss Belden. "Are you so blind as not to perceive that your sad bringing up entitles you to the pity and prayers of all good christians?"

"Ah! I thought it was a sad bringing up until I came here, then I discovered how happy it had been."

Miss Deborah's little eyes sparkle spitefully.

"It is your business to earn the regard of honest people if you can. You are singularly dull if you have not noticed the distrust with which you are regarded. No young woman of higher social standing than Miss Fortune has visited you. It was not to be expected, even taking into consideration the respect which is felt for me. A Roman Catholic girl with ——"

But Lenore, her fingers in her ears, dashes out of the kitchen door. "I believe she will drive me crazy," she thinks. "If she could once do that, and have me shut up somewhere, she would be satisfied."

It is one of Lenore's favorite amusements to plan improvements in the neglected broad grounds of the old homestead. But this morning she has no eyes nor thought for its possibilities. She walks along listlessly under the giant elms toward her garden-bed which shows such a bright, cheerful face in the glorious sunlight that her own involuntarily changes.

"Ah, you love me," she murmurs, stooping over the flowers, "even though I am sad and stupid, and never laugh any more. Which of you shall go with me? Which has been busiest this morning? Ah! Here you are, Bright-eyes. What a glorious blossom! Now hold firm and strong while I take you, and do not lose your petals," but, with her fingers on the stem, Lenore pauses. In her whimsical pretence that the flowers are sentient, her heart yearns over those she is neglecting. "No," she says suddenly, selecting the most inferior of them, "you shall come. I know what it is to be poor and counted of no value. You are just as dear to me as though you had a wealth of beauty. You shall come!" and tenderly tucking the stem of the forlorn, half-withered geranium under her belt, the equally forlorn little teacher sallies forth.

Down the grass-grown drive-way she moves slowly, beginning to realize that there is some ability for

enjoyment left in her yet. It rained last night, and the air is sweet with perfume from great wet bunches of lilacs. The birds, whose ancestral homes are these sturdy elms, are singing shrilly sweet in the branches. The breeze has as yet no enervating warmth. It is one of those June days which make us understand how Lowell's poem came to be written. Lenore fills her lungs with the blessed air, and looking up at the blue heavens, walks on, temporarily forgetful of all ills and disappointments. She has just passed out of the gateway, when a woman suddenly steps in front of her. Lenore gives a little exclamation, and regards the apparition wonderingly. The stranger wears a calico dress, and a shade hat tied under her chin by storm-beaten ribbons. She carries a market basket on her arm, and regards the girl with shrewd, kindly eyes. Her short upper lip, the unusual narrowness of her face, and sharp brightness of her eyes, give her an exceedingly alert expression.

"Is your name Fayette?" she inquires.

"Yes," assents Lenore.

"I knew it must be. I declare I'm mighty sorry, but then I suppose the Creator knew best."

"A crazy woman!" thinks Lenore, preparing to run back into the grounds.

The woman catches her arm as she turns.

"Wait one minute. I've waited a half an hour for you. My name's Hepsy Nash. Ever heard it?"

Lenore shakes her head.

"Don't be afraid, Lenore. What a queer name!

I declare you have to say it all through your nose. There isn't, from all I can find out, a soul in Alderley that cares as much what becomes of you as I do. Why, I knew your mother, little girl."

Lenore still shakes her head, but this time doubtfully. There is no mistaking the compassion and kindness in the eyes that never relinquish their hold on hers.

"So did every one here. That does not seem to matter."

"That's what I say. It's all because you do favor your pa so. It's awful unfort'nate, that's what it is; but then the Creator must know best."

"You knew him then,—my father?" Lenore asks, still hesitating, and drawing away a little.

"I seen him many a time, dearie." The loving term is fairly drawn out of Hepsy by the look of the deep, sombre eyes, and the sad little mouth. "He was a handsome feller, and probably you've found out by this time that your ma didn't have much to love at home, and - Now, now, Lenore," for the girl has suddenly burst into wild weeping, - "that's right! You just come with me and have it out." Hepsy's wagon and horse are not far off, the latter browsing contentedly by the roadside. She puts a strong arm around Lenore. "Come along, Tim," she says over her shoulder, and the animal follows her. "Supposin' the old lady should take it into her head to go out for a stroll. 'T would n't never do for her to find us cryin' under the enemy's walls." Lenore, her face pressed against the clean, faded little shawl

pinned across Miss Nash's chest, submits to be guided down a lane, and seated under a tree, with the kind arm still about her. Tim follows closely. "Go 'way Tim!" exclaims Hepsy, looking into the mild, inquiring eyes bending above her. "Don't you know two 's company, three's a crowd? Now, Lenore, you pretty little creeter, do you cry just as hard as you want to, an' just as long as you want to. I lived in the house with your ma for years, an' after she'd gone I know what that house was like; an' I know what it's like now. You cry away!" finishes Hepsy, patting the girl's shoulder, and making unearthly faces at an opposite tree-trunk, in the effort not to break down under the influence of her companion's sobs.

Then there is silence for a few minutes. Tim has resumed his munching at the short grass. Lenore grows quiet, and lies with her face hidden on her new friend's breast, and Hepsy gazes admiringly and lovingly down on the shining black hair, from which she has removed the hat.

At last the girl sits up. "It is a relief to cry," she says, "when one is homesick."

It is not the sort of remark Hepsy has expected, but she accepts it with ready tact.

"Yes, I know it is. Now you set right still," jumping up briskly, "while I fetch you a drink. I always have to drink after I cry," and going to the wagon, she opens cans and baskets with an energetic hand, shortly returning with a glass of rich milk and a plate of new gingerbread, cut in slices. Lenore, leaning languidly against the tree, looks up eagerly at sight of this lunch.

"I do like ginger cake," says Hepsy, with elaborate carelessness. "It goes good with milk."

"And I am very—thirsty, thank you," says Lenore. Hepsy gives her the glass, sets the plate beside her, and goes back to the wagon, presently returning with two oranges and a small milk-can.

"Oranges go good when you're thirsty," she says, apologetically, taking n seat beside Lenore, into whose lap she has dropped the yellow balls. "Your Aunt taught me to make this," she adds, nonchalantly, beginning to eat a piece of the gingerbread.

"Ah? It is very nice. I'm afraid she has forgotten how, herself," says Lenore, naïvely.

"Should n't wonder. Folks's memories are very apt to give out as they get old," returns Hepsy, drily. "And now I expect you wonder who and what I am."

"I do not wonder so much. You are the second person who has been kind to me in Alderley."

"Who was the first?" jealously.

"A gentleman."

"Oh! Very likely. They'll be apt to be very kind to you," and Hepsy emphasizes her remark by filling the girl's half-empty glass from the milk-can. "Well, I was turned away, one day, from Elmdale, where I had lived a good while as help, and then an uncle o' mine who lives up on the mountain set me up on a little farm right near his, and I've made it go first-rate. I sell milk, and eggs, and vegetables, and fruit—anything I can raise up there, an' I've got a real cosy little home. I hope you can come and see it some day, but I shan't urge you to do nothin' that

would make things worse, and there's no doubt it would make things worse if your Aunt knew you had anythin' to do with me."

"Does not my Aunt like you?"

"Not much-have some more milk."

"But I can not," protests Lenore, as the little white stream flows into her goblet. "This is a magic glass, it is never dry. Now this is all, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"No Mrs. about it," explains Hepsy, good-humoredly. "I'm one o' the surplus New England old maids. Have n't you never heard about them?"

Lenore shakes her head gravely. "No, but if they are all as kind as you, I shall hope to know a great many of them. Why, you have not even asked me if I make the sign of the cross, and if I really go to confession. You are very nice and kind, and I like you."

Hepsy's narrow face beams.

"Do oranges grow on your farm?" asks Lenore, contemplating those in her lap.

"Child alive! No."

"I was only wondering how they and this cake happened to be in your wagon."

Hepsy blushes, and stammers. "Why—why, good land, I have to have lunch, don't I? Rattlin' around in that cart all day makes a person hungry, I tell you. Many a time I don't get home before six o'clock. My round's a pretty long one, and Tim ain't no race horse—are you, Tim? Not but what you're a good old feller," for the horse, hearing his name, comes nodding across the lane, close to Hepsy, and noses down into her lap.

"The funny creature!" laughs Lenore, gaily, stroking his face.

"Fie Tim! Huntin' for ginger-cake. That's what

ails you."

"O, may I give him some," cries Lenore.

"Certain you may. That horse haint no more politeness than a broom stick," observes Hepsy, delightedly, watching the young girl's pleasure.

- "What a good time I have had!" sighs Lenore when the last crumb of ginger-bread has gone. has made me forget my lesson," she adds starting to her feet. "I shall be a full hour late. I must go. Miss - Miss -"
- "Hepsy, just call me Hepsy as your ma did before you."
  - "Thank you so much, Hepsy, for your friendliness."
- "Pshaw, I wish I could do more—I wish I could do more. But I can't. Your place is with your aunt."
- "I have not complained of her, have I?" girl asks it anxiously as she is tying on her hat.
- "No," returns Hepsy with an odd smile, "but if the time should come when you were in a quandary what to do, remember there's Hepsy Nash of Hillside Farm to call upon."
- "I will remember," Lenore promises, gravely. "There is a little brook where I can wash my hands. I believe it is the very water that has just come past my geranium bed."

"Do you like geraniums? If you do I can give you a variety that I'll bet you have n't got."

"That would please me so much," replies Lenore, lifting her grateful eyes, and smiling.

"And now good-bye," putting her little hand in Miss Nash's clean, hard palm.

"Good-bye, Lenore, I'll wait here till you've gone down the street. It'll be just as well."

She stands meditatively watching the movements of the light, quick figure, that pauses at the turn of the lane, and waves its hand in a parting salute.

"That poor little lonely young one!" muses Hepsy.
"I calc'lated to fill her up, and I guess I done it. I know as well as I want to know that the heft o' the time she feels like a bronze image—holler way down to the ankles!"

### CHAPTER VII.

## LENORE'S VOCATION.

RS. FORTUNE'S sitting-room is a pleasant, sunny place, with a door, at present open, leading out to a piazza, and thence into the grounds. She and her daughter are there this morning, awaiting the arrival of their youthful teacher. Miss Fortune sits listlessly watching her mother's unpracticed hand sketch daisies on a tambourine. From the distant drawing-room comes the whistling of the workmen with which Miss Fortune's canary keeps up an energetic rivalry. The two women are of strangely different types to be so closely related, the daughter being a picture of plump good-nature, while the mother is thin, wiry, alert, with a sarcastic mouth and keen eyes that are impatiently contemptuous of her child's slow perceptions.

"Is n't it a wonder, ma, the way she can turn them off?" asks Miss Fortune, dubiously regarding the flat effect of her mother's effort.

"It is like everything else; easy enough when you know how," responds the other. "I mean to insist next upon Miss Fayette's letting me do a scarlet geranium. It will be amusing to see her manoeuvre to get out of it."

"O ma, don't tease her."

"Nonsense. I haven't forgiven her yet for her sentimentality in refusing to let me have that black panel. 'I do not sell the geranium;'" mimics Mrs. Fortune, contemptuously.

"O ma!" protests the daughter again. "She was sincere, and how pretty she looked when she said it; so sort of—sort of mournful. You must confess that she is pretty."

"Yes, pretty enough for anyone who admires that black sort, all eyes. Why, ahem!" for the speaker here catches sight of a figure hesitating in the open, outer door-way. "Come in Miss Fayette, we were just speaking of an angel," continues Mrs. Fortune, unblushingly, although she sincerely wishes the rustle of the wings had been audible before the utterance of that last criticism. "How do you do? Isn't it growing warm? Let me take your hat. I believe you have come without a flower at last. No, there it is," as Lenore raises the pinched and faded blossom. "Well, if you cannot find a better one than that, I can provide you. I was telling Dr. Lemist the other day of your love for them. I told him I thought there must be some romance at the bottom of it all. But you look tired, as though you had not slept well of late. I hope you are not growing homesick."

"No," replies Lenore, with a weary air. "What place could I be homesick for? Have your people come yet?"

"Not yet," answers Miss Fortune, casting a troubled glance at her mother and then at Lenore. "I—I hope, Miss Fayette, you are not counting on Miss

Saltonstall's coming," she adds, with anxious embarrassment. "In the first place, she is so much older than you are, you will not care much for her society, and in the second place, she—you—she—"

"In the second place," interrupts Mrs. Fortune, coming to the rescue with her bitter little smile, "Miss Saltonstall is a superb and terrible person who rarely takes notice of the inferior atoms who populate the rest of the world."

"Not that at all," protests Miss Fortune, loyally, "but she is reserved, and—and high at first, and—"

"And you are afraid she will snub me? Oh no," finishes Lenore, "I am not anticipating their coming for my own sake."

"Mrs. Saltonstall is very easy to get acquainted with," pursues Miss Fortune, looking relieved. "She is ever so kind and nice. You know she and Ma have known each other ever since they were young. They were schoolmates once, and—"

"I have told you not to refer to that," interrupts Mrs. Fortune sharply.

Lenore makes a gesture of impatience. "'Much ado about nothing,'" she says; "I only inquired because I felt interested for that young man who you told me was haunting the place to find them."

Mrs. Fortune, at this, gives Lenore a keen, ironical glance, and then resumes her painting.

"Ah!" exclaims Miss Fortune, rolling up her eyes, then suddenly grasping Lenore by the arm, she ducks at her and whispers, "I have put him into my romance! Don't tell ma," and with an admonitory pinch she places a chair for the teacher. "Yes, he has been here again," she says aloud. "It is so queer that he won't write to them, nor let us write, and yet wishes so much to see them. The last time he came he looked really angry when I told him they were still away—a magnificent sort of an angry look, you know, but goodness, how could they come? I told him the workmen were still here. I expect, though, they will finish to-day, and then how peaceful we shall be."

"It would seem peaceful now, if you would stop talking and give Miss Fayette an opportunity to do what she came to do," remarks Mrs. Fortune, and Lenore, smiling upon the snubbed one, asks her a simple question in French. But Miss Fortune would prefer to receive any number of round scoldings than one of Lenore's gracefully put little sentences. She looks suddenly dismayed, rubs her hands together nervously, makes a series of terrifying grimaces, and finally utters the monosyllable—"Oui."

Lenore, nodding polite encouragement, speaks once more, asking her pupil a question about the weather.

Miss Fortune wriggles about in her chair, and, with great facial preparation, ejaculates—

"Oui."

Lenore laughs; the rare, merry laugh so full of contagion.

"Ah, the word sticks in your throat. Why is that? It is not difficult."

Miss Fortune reddens confusedly. "I had n't any idea it would be so hard," she says, looking, Lenore thinks, more than ever like a parrot, as she moves her

head slowly in her embarrassment. "I am afraid you will be discouraged to find me so stupid after you have worked with me two weeks."

"No, we must not be discouraged. Let us see if it will not inspire you if we talk of the new, handsome gentleman."

Miss Fortune does not look sanguine, but Lenore, in a business-like tone, proceeds slowly and impressively to ask a question, first in English, then in French.

"What color are the eyes of this young man?"

In due time Miss Fortune laboriously asserts that they are brown.

"And what color are his hairs?"

These also the pupil describes laconically as brown. Lenore shakes her head. "That becomes too easy. Say after me, The gentleman has an ugly mouth. Now—"

"Oh, but he has n't, you know."

Lenore shrugs her shoulders. "Then can you not say of yourself something to describe this rare creature?"

Miss Fortune swallows several times, and after much squirming, and almost alarming effort, she discloses in the foreign tongue the astounding fact that the stranger has a nose!

"Bravo! Bravo!" cries the teacher, laughing until her eyes are wet.

"What is the joke?" asks Mrs. Fortune.

"Nothing, nothing," replies Lenore, vainly endeavoring to bring her risibles into order. "Miss Fortune

did well, but I am not sensible to-day. I have had much on my mind, and am ready to laugh at trifles. I do not think I shall be good for anything this morning. I believe I shall ask to be excused," and she rises.

As she does so a deliberate step is heard on the piazza, there is a rap on the open door, and a gentleman comes into the room. He is rather short, and rather stout, middle-aged, with some gray hairs in his short, close beard, and his blue eyes are the kindest that ever twinkled at a joke. He is very carefully dressed, and has the air of being sure of his ground.

It has happened before that Lenore has met him here. She smiles with the others at sight of him.

"Just in time, Doctor," remarks Mrs. Fortune, without rising. "You are just in time to give Miss Fayette a nervine. She is on the point of hysterics. Daughter's French has been too much for her."

"I do not look like that, do I?" asks Lenore, lifting a face that smiles bewitchingly under her broad hat.

"It is not Miss Fortune's French that made me laugh, it is her wit."

"Give me the benefit of it," says the doctor, seating himself with the air of a familiar friend. "What have you been saying that is so amusing, Miss Fortune?"

"Why-nothing-only-"

Lenore interrupts suddenly. "It is secret, Miss Fortune. You and I only will keep it," she says, nodding mysteriously. "Let us not tell them."

"It was about the new young man, Mr. Burley. I

can inform you of that," remarks Mrs. Fortune, over whose chair Lenore is leaning, making a daisy center stand out with a few touches of the brush.

"What is it that he wants of the Saltonstalls? Tell us about him," begs Miss Fortune, "I don't see why you wish to be so mysterious."

Dr. Lemist smiles good-humoredly. "The last time I was here you were not well enough to hear gossip."

"But I am quite well to-day. See," and Miss Fortune eagerly offers her plump wrist.

The doctor waves her away. "I see that you are quite restored, and as a reward of merit, I shall be happy to satisfy your curiosity."

"Which it is your duty to do," puts in Lenore, mischievously. "She is writing him up."

"Look here, Miss Fortune, what part do I play in that work?" asks the doctor, with the air of having repeated the question many times. "Come! Since you acknowledged to having put me in, I do not think it is treating me fairly—"

"Hush!" exclaims Miss Fortune, pinching his arm in great trepidation, and repeating in pantomime the supplication, "Don't tell ma!"

"But I'm concerned about it," remonstrates the doctor, in a lower tone. "I am too far past thirty, and too stout for the lover, and if you will only allay my suspicion that I am the heavy villain, I'll not trouble you farther."

Mrs. Fortune takes no notice of this conversation. As low an opinion as she has of her daughter's abilities, she is nevertheless her mother, and therefore

pleased that the young woman should be exchanging confidences with the bachelor doctor, so generally courted by the mothers round about.

But Miss Fortune is not aware of this indulgent mental attitude, and Dr. Lemist, seeing her look really troubled, desists. "Very well, another time, then," he says. "And now as to Mr. Burley."

"Alan Burley," puts in Miss Fortune, folding her hands and falling into an attitude of attention. "He left his card here the other day."

Lenore's eyes widen upon hearing the full name, but she says nothing. Dr. Lemist leans back in his chair and taps his knee gently with the crown of his hat.

"Well, in the first place, he came to Alderley just after recovering from a long illness, and intends to devote the next few months to building himself up."

"In Alderley?"

"In Alderley. Happy Alderley!"

"He has put himself under your care?"

"Ah, the unerring intuition of woman! He has. Get your note-book ready, Miss Fortune, for never did writer have such an opportunity to study from life as awaits you."

"Why? What?"

"Then you do not know. Mr. Burley is Miss Saltonstall's cousin, and he is expecting to visit here."

"For mercy's sake!" ejaculates Miss Fortune, while her mother, unmoved, paints on. "Then that is why he looks so savage because they don't come." "There is evidently some misunderstanding, and it may end in Mr. Burley's leaving town without accomplishing the proposed visit."

"That would be too cruel to Miss Fortune," says Lenore, archly, as she ties her hat-ribbons under her smoothly-braided hair.

"Are you going, Miss Fayette? My next visit takes me past Elmdale," says the doctor, rising also, and speaking with frank kindness. "Will you drive with me?"

Lenore looks gravely at Mrs. Fortune. "Is that permitted?" she asks.

"Proper, do you mean? Certainly, and very pleasant, too."

"Then I will not detain you," says the doctor. "I —"

"No, do not hurry for me," interrupts Lenore. "I have an errand in the village and can not drive with you; but I ask to learn the customs. Good afternoon," and before either of the surprised trio can speak, she has left the house.

"She is a sly-boots, if I ever saw one," says Mrs. Fortune, bursting into a laugh. "Who would believe, to see her demure ways, that she holds tête-à-tête meetings in the garden with strange young men. I wonder if she stops to ask Miss Belden if that, too, is permitted."

Dr. Lemist reddens. "Those vague, slighting remarks do a great deal of harm, sometimes," he says, stiffly. "It is better to come out openly with an accusation, always."

"It is no great crime, I suppose," returns the

widow, unmoved. "Miss Fayette seemed to be enjoying herself very much when I saw her with Mr. Burley by the greenhouse, but to-day, when we were talking about him, she knew no more of him than the babe unborn. Oh, these convent-bred girls! Look out, Dr. Lemist, or all your years and discretion may be insufficient to protect you."

There is no doubting now that the doctor's face is deeply, darkly red. Anger at this stinging woman, futile longing to say something in Lenore's defence which she cannot ridicule, and disgust that the reminder of his thirty-seven years finds him sensitive, combine to render him speechless for half a minute; but he recovers his self-possession.

"I must not loiter any longer," he says, briefly. "I am very glad, Miss Fortune, to find you quite yourself again. Good morning."

"O, ma!" protests Miss Fortune, on the verge of tears, when he has gone.

"What?" with a provoking smile.

"Don't turn him against her."

"Never mind her. You mind your own p's and q's, and take care not to have that dowdy dress on the next time he comes."

"What does Dr. Lemist care for my appearance?"

"Perhaps nothing, perhaps everything."

But this laconic reply fails to enlighten Miss Fortune as to her mother's drift. The latter turns around and observes her perplexed stare, and gives a little grunt of vexation.

"Oh! One would think you were born yesterday!" she exclaims, in exasperated accents.

# CHAPTER VIII.

#### AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

Nash is driving her lightened wagon through Alderley. The town, especially rich in desirable sites for homes, inasmuch as nearly every house is set upon a hill of its own, nestles at the foot of still another hill of such comparative altitude that it is called by the townspeople a mountain; and this mountain is far more enjoyable in its winding drives and green shade, than many another with more claim to grandeur. Its summit is covered with smooth, bare rock, which has given it the title of Bald Head, and on its fertile sides are set fruit and stock farms in flourishing condition.

Toward one of these Hepsy's horse is trotting briskly, visions of the good supper awaiting him lending fleetness to his tired feet. Only when he begins the winding ascent of the mountain he changes his trot to a steady walk, and Hepsy, the reins hanging loosely from her hands, does not hurry him. This uncouth woman is a sincere lover of nature, and as they start up the mountain road in the tempered afternoon sunshine, she is awake to the loveliness about her; to the hidden activity of youthful summer in the woods; the brimming life of the squirrel scampering over the stone wall; the patient, joyful expectancy of

the bird waiting motionless in her swaying nest; the wild, mellow whistle of her busy mate; and when, in a sudden, steep turn of the road, a tumbling brook races madly past her, albeit the sight is a daily one, she gazes at it affectionately, pushing her sun-hat back from her face. She feels the joy of the moment keenly, but she only says:

"G'lang, Tim."

At her right now lies a deep crevice filled with tall trees, whose topmost boughs reach but little higher than her head, and as Hepsy is taking note of how fully their leaves have unfolded in the past week, there comes from the depths below a strange sound, which seems to her ears half shout, half wail, and altogether as weird and wild a noise as ever assailed woman's ears in a lonely spot. From low to high it soars, then after a moment fades away in a fashion to curdle even strong-minded Miss Nash's sturdy Yankee blood. Her first impulse is to lay the whip over Tim and flee the place. The horse pricks up his ears, but is less disturbed than his driver. She, however, quickly controls her impulse. What! Permit that rift in the mountain always to hold a mystery for her? Never again to pass the spot without fear and trembling? Hepsy scorns the idea, and even while the strange voice, not unmusical in its wild way, repeats its cry, she jumps from the wagon and turns Tim to the side of the road.

"It must be some poor creeter that's fell down there, an' mebbe broke its leg," she mutters. "Stand still, Tim," and going to the brink she peers over,

and then begins cautiously to descend. Half way down she distinguishes a dark object through the trees. Still more quietly she picks her way, then clings to a rugged trunk and gazes before her.

The dark object is a man, she sees now, and the strange cry is proceeding from his lips. Now, for a passing moment, Hepsy is indeed almost paralyzed with terror. She confidently believes herself to be alone in the ravine with a maniac. With starting eyes she beholds him take off his hat and send it spinning high above his head.

"Hurrah!" he shouts, "I have it again! It is coming back at last!" Then the speaker, in the exuberance of his satisfaction, bursts into song in the

stillness of the woods:

"Ever thus alone with thee. Would my life most happy be."

He pours forth the words with exaggerated sentiment and superb volume of sound, but pauses at the close of the line, transfixed with amazement as he catches sight of a lank figure clinging to the sturdy oak, and meets the wonder-stricken gaze under the tipped back sun-hat.

For a moment it would be hard to tell which of the two stares the harder; but a realizing sense of the fitness of his love-song, and an appreciation of the position takes possession of him, and dropping on a stump, Alan Burley makes the echoes ring with another exercise of his vocal organs, - one which his auditor understands perfectly.

She is good humored enough not to be angered by

his laughter, and sharp enough to wish to punish him for the fright he has caused her; so, as soon as he is in a condition to listen, she speaks, with a shrewd twinkle in her eye:

"I was passin' above there, and I heard a queer noise, and concluded there was a calf down here that wanted more rope. So I came down to see if I could n't help the poor creeter."

"I am infinitely sorry to have given you so much trouble," replies Mr. Burley, indistinctly.

Hepsy looks at him curiously. "What did you say you'd got again?" she asks seriously. "You don't look real rugged. Are you subject to poor spells like what you just had?"

"O, I shall die," moans the young man, half suffocated, really worn out from unwonted exercise and immoderate laughter. "Yes, madam," he returns at last, "and I am sorry your ears should have been pained by my struggles. I have come here before when I felt symptoms of such an attack, but never happened to disturb any one. I live at the hotel in the village, and you see it would never do to have one there."

"I should say not." Hepsy looks admiringly at the pale face. Then, beside being handsome, this young man has called her "madam." She is moved by an interest in him as warm as though she were young and beautiful, instead of a middle-aged marketwoman in a calico dress.

"You look beat," she says, "an' you've got a good piece to walk to the hotel. I've got my wagon up

here, an' a little milk left. Come up an' have a drink."

"Blessings on you," responds Alan, following her with alacrity as she scrambles up the bank. "I had no idea of finding beneficent dairy wagons in the heart of these woods, but I am thirsty enough to take the gifts the gods provide, and ask no questions."

Hepsy, mounting to her accustomed seat, pours from a large can into the brightest of quart measures, a draught of Alderney milk, and passes it down to Alan.

He leans against placid Tim, hat in hand, looking boyishly handsome, with the waves of short, dark hair clinging to his moist forehead, for he is very warm; shouting, laughing, and climbing are severe exercises.

"Here's to you," he says, with a smiling nod and gesture towards his entertainer, then raises the cup with a relish.

Hepsy, her hands on her hips, watches him with evident satisfaction; and when the measure is tilted to the utmost, she heaves an unconscious sigh of sympathy. "Did you like that?" she asks, as his eyes reappear.

"Don't calves always like milk?"

The woman laughs. "You must n't mind me. But I don't really believe now 't was an attack," she says, with a shrewd twist of her head.

"Yes it was, the attack of a note. I'll do it again if you like, and show you."

"No, you won't!" exclaims Hepsy, real horror in

her face. "If you made that racket o' your own free will I'm most sorry I gave you the milk."

"Woman, that racket, as you call it, was originated by one of the greatest singing teachers of the day!" announces Alan, grandiloquently gesturing with the cup. "He calls it the 'index tone."

"Well, all is I hope he'll meet one of his precious tones unbeknownst in the woods some day. If it don't make his hair rise I'm mistaken," and the speaker claps on the cover of her tin can. "The man must be a fool!" she adds, disposing of the subject.

"I will tell him so with your compliments," laughs Alan. "I'm sorry to have robbed you of the milk under false pretences."

Hepsy feels her heart melt like wax under the merry glance. "You're heartily welcome to it," she says. "That's the kind o' stuff that'll upholster them big bones o' yours, an' make your eyes look some smaller. When you want some more come up to Hillside Farm any Tuesday or Saturday and ask for Hepsy Nash. G'lang, Tim."

Mr. Burley surveys the ungainly departure with keen appreciation, and as the horse starts he lifts his hat as he would to Miss Saltonstall herself. Hepsy's eyes meet his, and if it were possible she could believe herself to be blushing beneath the delightful salutation.

"Good-bye, an' don't make no more o' them noises," is her parting remark, then Tim, pulling steadily up the hill, follows a turn in the wooded road, and the wagon moves out of sight.

The afternoon is drawing to a close, and the sun ready to sink behind the rocks on Bald Head when Hepsy approaches the gap in the low stone wall that surrounds her thrifty property. Tim pulls away with a will at sight of his own familiar barn, but his mistress's attention is called to the peculiar motions of the head with which the horse seems striving to drive away some annoying object near the ground.

"What ails you, Tim?" she inquires, craning her neck out and surveying the animal's legs. Simultaneously with her question the silence is broken by a series of short, sharp barks, and Hepsy perceives a small Scotch terrier frisking along under Tim's sedate nose.

"Well, now, where did you spring from?" she murmurs. "Go home, dog!" she adds, emphasizing the order by a shake of the whip toward the stranger, who circles off out of sight. Hepsy gives no further thought to the occurrence, and drives on to the barn, where she dismounts, unharnesses Tim and gives him his supper before returning to her own.

"Good old horse," she says, patting his side at parting, "I wish I was as sure that unlucky French young one would get a good meal, to-night, as I am that you will. That young man too—he can't get nothin' fit for a human bein' to eat at that tavern. I wish I could have him up here a few days."

Filled with these hospitable thoughts, Hepsy slides to the barn doors, and walks up the slope to the comfortable, squat, little farm house. It is very sweet and fresh in this uplifted corner of the universe at the twilight hour. Hepsy feels grateful for her many blessings as she looks about her and her large heart fills with compassion for those less blessed.

But as she nears the house she starts with surprise; for there, sitting on the door step, his shaggy head on one side and his saucy ears erect, sits the scotch terrier, evidently awaiting her coming and as evidently, from sundry doubtful, conciliatory taps of his tail on the stone, not quite certain of his reception.

"F' the land's sake, if there aint that dog again!" she exclaims, standing still. "I know as much about dogs as I do about the other side o' the moon. What I do know is, I don't want hydrophoby." She opens her eyes to their widest extent, purses up her mouth until her face looks narrower than ever, catches hold of the sides of her skirt and giving an emphatic stamp—exclaims, "Shoo!"

The terrier cocks his head still further on the side in an attitude of keenest attention, but remains still as a statue but for his mobile nose, which wiggles in anxious interrogation.

There is a moment of irresolute silence, then,

"Go home!" orders Hepsy, sternly, with another stamp.

The dog rises to his feet, and Miss Nash cannot read the signs of his depressed ears and tail. She takes a precipitate step backward.

"Land! I do believe he's comin' for me. Good dog! good feller, sir!" she calls hastily. "How the little imp's eyes do shine through all that hair," she adds, as the intruder, picking up courage, gives a

short bark and wags his tail. "Keepin' a woman out of her own house this way. I should like to know if I've got to stand here all night. Go home doggie," ingratiatingly this time, "go home, good feller, sir."

However much the wise-looking stranger may understand of her words, the tone at least gives him courage. He lifts his short tail and jumps briskly off the door stone and trots toward her. As he advances, Hepsy retreats, her narrow countenance gaining color and her eyes roundness.

"Land o' liberty! Get back there, get back I tell you!" then, as the mischievous terrier sees his advantage, and makes delighted springs at her which send cold chills down her spine, Hepsy suddenly recalls all she has ever heard of the necessity of concealing from animals one's fear of them. She pauses and stands stock still. She is a brave woman, and could, nay has, seized the ring in the nose of a fierce bull and led him whithersoever she would; but the bite of a dog! That of all things in the world she dreads most. Blood-curdling accounts of hydrophobia in the daily papers always draw her with an awful fascination. One little drawer in her quaint old secretary is filled with clippings directing one to various antidotes to the poison; but even the security of her knowledge of the onion and garlic cure, the cauterizing with hot iron, even the mild safeguard of sucking the wound, fails to comfort her now as she stands rigid, her hands enwrapped in the folds of her gown, her feet pressed closely together and her eyes rolling stealthily to the side where the frolicsome dog is leaning.

"Good dog, good feller, sir," she repeats tremblingly, at which the waif, overjoyed at the compliment displays alarming agility.

"O why did n't I stone you while you was on the step, you little imp!—good doggie, good doggie," she adds hastily, for at the change of tone the terrier has stopped barking and stood still to regard her. "Where in the world did you come from and why don't you go back there?" then gaining courage from the energetic wag of the dog's tail which even she can only construe as friendly, she repeats with some determination, but still not daring to stir lest she shall incite him to leap again.

"Go home, sir!"

The little fellow gives her one sidewise look, then to Hepsy's infinite surprise, sits up on his hind legs and lifting his fore paws until they rest behind his ears, remains in this posture while Hepsy stares, relaxes her rigid muscles, and finally smiles broadly.

"Well, now, that's kind o' cunnin' I declare! Hard o' hearin' are you? There's none so deaf as them that won't hear. Ever heard that? I said," lifting her voice, "I said go home!"

The terrier waves his fore paws in the air in a pleading manner, and then restores them to their former position.

Hepsy, her hands on her hips, regards him curiously. "You don't want to, eh? The more fool you. I don't like dogs. I would n't have you 'round if that rough coat o' yours was gold thread. How would I know what minute you might go mad, if you aint

now. Land o'liberty," with a return of trepidation, "I wonder how long it is since you've had any water. If you won't go home I must get you some this minute," and she cautiously puts out her foot and takes a tentative step. Finding that the movement does not develop any alarming demonstration from her companion, she goes on faster and faster toward the house, the little dog trotting along gaily beside her. Arrived at the door, Hepsy opens it just wide enough to admit her own lank person, and hurriedly closes it upon her companion. She goes to the clean sink and dips water from a pail into a hand-basin. Then she stands still to listen. Not a sound. Perhaps after all the dog has disappeared as suddenly as he came. She crosses, on tiptoe, to a window beside the door and peers carefully out. No, there, sitting on the broad, flat stone, patiently watching the door, is the terrier, large as life.

"And now supposin' he's just ready to go mad, this water'll do the business. I don't darst to give it to him! And still, if I don't give it to him I may be kep' a prisoner in the house by a mad dog runnin' about the place." Hepsy heaves a deep sigh; but suddenly an idea strikes her. She goes to the stove and gets the tongs, comes back to the window and raises it. The terrier pricks up his ears and looks expectant. Hepsy grasps the pan carefully between the iron nippers and, leaning out of the window, lowers the water to the ground. At first sight of the dish the dog promptly assumes his begging posture, and as soon as it is within reach, bounds under the window and

drinks greedily. This relieves Hepsy. According to all reliable statements, while a dog will drink water he is a safe member of society. She watches the thirsty little creature satisfy his craving with that beaming pleasure which always fills her at sight of the enjoyment of others.

"Poor thing, he was most famished," she mutters, and the terrier, having finished, looks up at her brightly, and wags his tail.

"O, don't mention it. You're welcome," says Hepsy, grinning, and reaching down for the basin.

But as the terrier sees it drawn up, he sits up again and begs.

"What's the matter? Oh," reflectively, "you're hungry I suppose. No, sir," shaking her head, decidedly, "feed a dog and he'll stick to you for ever. Go home and get your dinner, sir," and Hepsy closes the window, seeing through the glass a vision of fervently waving paws. She tries to forget about them, as she takes off her hat and hangs it up, and builds the little fire to make her cup of tea; but when she goes to the pantry to bring forth the platter of cold meat, a vexatious nursery rhyme jingles through her head:

"Old Mother Hubbard
She went to the cupboard
To get her poor dog a bone!"

And she sees as though they were actually before her, those bright, wistful eyes gazing through the shock of hair. She tries to think that they had a vicious light in them. "Nothin' more dangerous to have around than a dog," she mutters, moving about more energetically than before to set her table. She places the platter of meat before her solitary plate. There is one cold mutton chop among the slices of beef. The bone in its centre has a significance for her that no bone ever possessed before.

"What was that?" Hepsy pauses to listen. She imagines she heard a timid scratch on the door; but no, all is still. She tiptoes laboriously across to the window again, and peers out. It will be such a relief to her mind if the stone step is vacant, but it is not vacant. There sits the unwelcome visitor, his eyes persistently glued to the door.

Hepsy stifles a groan and turns away determined to forget the patience of that attitude. She goes to the stove and pours out a cup of tea, meanwhile settling her chin down into her throat, and beginning to sing as a means of diversion.

"Since first I saw your face
I resolved to honor and renown you.
If now I am disdained
I wish—"

But whether the outsider dislikes Miss Nash's vocal method, or whether his yearning for companionship is painfully augmented by the sound of her voice, the singer is here interrupted by a gasping, quickly-stifled howl, and an unmistakable scratch on the door. She starts, listens, then tiptoes to the table and seats herself. But in vain she summons her healthy appetite and briskly butters her bread, slapping the slice first

with one side of the knife and then with the other She is too preoccupied to eat, and finds herself again quietly listening.

"Pshaw!" she exclaims at last, pushing her chair back. "What's the use. I hate dogs bad enough' but a body can't take comfort with somethin' sufferin, right on their very door-step. S'posin' the poor little beggar's gone off discouraged! I should never forgive myself," and, spearing the delectable mutton-chop with a fork, she hurries to the window, and, throwing it open, leans out. In a moment, with a brisk bound, the hungry dog is before her. He sits up and throws his paws back with such zeal to leave no stone unturned to win her favor that he rolls over on his back, but is up again in a second.

"There, poor feller," says Hepsy, dropping the meat. "Look at him," admiringly, "how he does crunch that bone. Land, he's swallowed it whole!" she adds in consternation, seizing the window-sash ready to bring it down with a bang upon the first sign from the terrier of internal disarrangement. But the little dog only wags his tail briskly, and eyes his entertainer earnestly.

"Now do you go home. There ain't a place here for you to sleep. Go home, sir," and down comes the window. "I do wish I liked dogs," mutters Hepsy as she sits down to her supper with a new zest.

After her dishes are washed, her evening psalm read, and she herself is ready for bed, Hepsy hesitates again, musing on her strange visitor. "It gives me such a queer feelin' to think of him lyin' just the

ther side o' that door and keepin' so still," she thinks. "He's got manners, that dog has. Somebody must have taken a pile o' trouble to learn him to set up that human way. Should n't wonder if he's been used to a better bed than that cold stone. There are folks that are just so reckless they'll have dogs around in their houses, and set store by 'em too. I expect I'm a soft-headed idiot, but I believe I'll put this out for him to lay on," picking up a square of faded carpet that lies before the stove. "Seems just as though I should sleep better myself, and it would be a pity if I was broke of my rest to-night, for there's lots to do to-morrow," and so murmuring, Miss Nash unlocks the door, and, opening it just wide enough to admit the carpet and her arm, pushes the former out on the stone. A great blankness comes over her face. "I believe he's gone," she is thinking, when rough fur pushes past her wrist and a velvet tongue licks her hand. She pulls in her arm with a violent start, slams the door, and runs to the sink, where she vigorously pumps water over the contaminated fingers for nearly five minutes. Then she carefully examines her hand by the light of her lamp. "There ain't a scratch on it. I guess I'm as good as new," she decides finally, and thereupon goes to bed.

But Hepsy is not yet through with her guest. She has been asleep about three hours when a furious, sharp barking awakes her. How it strikes on the serene stillness which has enveloped the little farm. Her heart knocks wildly against her ribs, and she strains her ears to listen. Not a doubt assails her as

to the dog's condition. Of course he has gone mad! She thinks with a sinking heart of her own licked hand as she leaps out of bed and to the window. A new moon is just setting, and by its faint radiance she can distinguish the light coat of the little terrier as he races about, yelping with undiminished vigor; but there is another sight which, when it crosses her vision, causes Hepsy to lean her head forward and forget all fear of physical ill in the alertness of the outraged property-owner. Two pairs of scampering human legs are certainly visible to her shrewd, strong eyes, and now she sees that these are the attractive center around which the terrier is flying in a wild orbit.

"I guess, come down to it, that dog ain't much madder than I am," she soliloquizes, throwing on her clothes, "with a pitch-fork," as she afterward describes her celerity. But short as is the time it takes her to light her lantern and rush to the scene of action, four of the scampering legs are gone, and only four remain to trot briskly and confidently toward her.

"What was it, eh?" asks Hepsy, excitedly, turning her light full on the panting terrier, who is still emitting little involuntary gasps and yelps. "Been earnin' your supper and your bed? How have you done it, eh? Poor, dumb feller, you can't tell, can you? I shall have to make the rounds and see. Don't you come. I'll feel full as easy if you don't. Go lie down, sir."

But the alert, quivering little dog gives a sharp bark of protest, and then begs.

"You don't want to, eh? Come along then, only ketch your breath first, f' the land's sake," with an uneasy, sidelong glance. "How you do sputter! What's that! a hen?" as there is a great running and fluttering past her, and she turns her lantern on the fleeing object. After that Hepsy waits for no further parley, but sets out on a run for the hen-house followed closely by the dog. The door stands wide open, but there is only a slight rustling within.

"All gone!" groans Hepsy, entering and closing the door behind her from force of habit. "No!" she exclaims joyfully, as the well-filled roosts greet her eye. I don't believe there's a one gone but that poor old scared-to-death biddy that just flew by us,—and this you've done!" turning her light on the terrier whose tail, and ears, and shining eyes, are uplifted with the boldness of conscious rectitude. She stoops down and cautiously, with rigidly straight fingers, pats the rough coat. "Well," she says deliberately, "I never felt so bad as I do this minute to think I don't like dogs!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### DR. LEMIST'S DIPLOMACY.

T is a healthy season of the year, and Dr Lemist has more time to think than is usual. It is natural that he should think considerable about Lenore Fayette. Indeed, if there were any reason, which there is not, for him to be unwilling to think about her it would be quite impossible just now to avoid it. Events are not so common in Alderley that the inhabitants are warranted in allowing one to slip by, out of mind, before every vestige of interest has been thoroughly extracted from it. The subject of Miss Belden's grandniece is far from being worn out. The girl has been kindly endowed by a discerning neighborhood with an inheritance of all her father's evils, and these, it is decided, have been fostered by her bringing-up; and tongues and heads have wagged so incessantly, and so slightingly before the doctor, that he would have been more than human had he not longed curiously to see the subject of their slurs. Considerable compassion for the new comer had sprung in his kind heart before any meeting with her came about. Even though she were as dangerous an element in the community as the gossips represented, she was a stranger in a strange land. Even though her religious tenets were such as sent horrified chills down

the spines of every member of Mr. Nasel's congregation, and though she were "deceitful," "violent," and "a thorn in Miss Belden's side," she was no less an orphan and very, very friendless.

Dr. Lemist is not a sentimental man. He works hard, as he has need to do, and has little time for anything more than the duty in hand; but his generous, humane heart, revolts at the wholesale invective indulged in by certain of his acquaintances who religiously keep their young people away from Elmdale, but go themselves, in eager curiosity to criticise, lament, and condole with its close-mouthed mistress.

When it first becomes known that Mrs. Fortune has actually engaged this foreign firebrand to teach herself and her daughter, it may be believed that the tongues wag faster than before. To be sure Miss Fortune is not so young as she once was, a woman of twenty-five ought to have her character sufficiently formed to be unassailable by the arts of a girl of eighteen. Miss Fortune stands higher in Alderley opinion than her sarcastic, reserved, non-church-going mother. Yes, on the whole Mrs. Fortune is just the one woman in town that these knowing ones would select to use such an edged tool as Lenore Fayette.

But as soon as this news reaches Dr. Lemist, his heart warms toward the Fortunes, and with malice prepense he drops in upon them one day when he knows the young teacher is expected. He is prepared to see some one upon whom might be fitted the opprobrium bestowed upon Miss Fayette; some one in short so entirely different from the real Lenore, that he

stares in unconscious rudeness when he is presented to her. She is dressed on that day in a white cambric frock with a little blue figure, made in a childish manner, and as she has not had courage to wind up her heavy braid of hair, it is hardly to be wondered at that the doctor glances involuntarily beyond the child for some tall, beetle-browed woman, to answer to the name which Miss Fortune pronounces.

"Are — are you Miss Belden's niece?" he asks in blunt amazement.

"Yes," replies Lenore, lifting her sombre eyes and returning the doctor's stare with interest. "Do you know her — my aunt?"

"No, I can hardly say I do," he responds, shaking off his surprise, and laughing with a shade of embarrassment. "I know very few people who are always well, and I believe Miss Belden is one of those favored ones."

Lenore makes a gesture of dissent. "I think she is far from well," she returns in her quick way, "but it would not be like her to have advice, because — well, because she would not."

Mrs. Fortune here puts in her word. "I dare say she wouldn't afford it."

"We have no right to say that!" returns Lenore, hastily.

Mrs. Fortune never can endure to have the girl "put on airs," as she terms it, and she replies coolly: "There are people in this town, Miss Fayette, who believe that your aunt has a hole in the wall, somewhere." "A hole in the wall!" repeats Lenore, mystified, and somewhat curious, as well.

"Yes. In other words, money hidden away."

"Do you mean that people say my Aunt Deborah is a miser?" asks Lenore deliberately.

"Well - yes. That is about it."

The girl reflects a moment, apparently forgetful of her three companions.

"That is n't the general opinion, you understand," adds Mrs. Fortune with a short laugh. "You need not build any hopes upon it."

And here the conversation ends; but Dr. Lemist, having found Lenore so pretty, and simple, and sadlooking, was the more disappointed to note the curtness and indifference of Mrs. Fortune's manner toward her; and, since that last visit, recorded a little farther back, when the lady's carelessness of the girl degenerated into downright slighting innuendo, he has been considerably exercised over the fortunes of the little maiden, and it being the season of the year when the most culpable neglect of hygienic rules is but lightly punished, Dr. Lemist has an unusual amount of time for thinking, and devotes a disproportionate amount of it to Lenore. All the chivalry of his nature revolts against the unequal war which the girl is unconsciously waging. He knows, if she does not, why the number of her pupils remains what it was in the beginning, and why the days at Elmdale are permitted to be so long and tedious. At last in righteous indignation he resolves to "do something about it. This senseless prejudice must not be allowed to continue. In

spite of Miss Deborah Belden, it must not." Dr. Lemist sees so plainly what no one beside himself appears to perceive, namely, that a few simple words and actions on Miss Belden's part are all that is needed to turn the tide in her niece's favor; and that these do not come, proves to the doctor's satisfaction that the private estimate he has already formed of pious Miss Deborah Belden is a correct one. Having settled this in his own mind, and, further, that he himself is the only person of any influence whom Lenore has on her side, the doctor plunges in, man-like, to right matters, and, of course, makes affairs worse than before. He has not altered popular opinion, but rather heightened the general feeling against Lenore by his zealous partizanship. This he wakes up to, one day, under the lashing tongue of a jealous mama, who conjures up a headache for the express purpose of luring the doctor within her door in order to let him understand that the whole town pities him for having been befooled by a designing French girl. The doctor, although good-natured, by no means consents that himself and his affairs shall be public property, and he makes a terse and pithy reply to his excited patient, and leaves her house for all time; but that does not prevent him from feeling the sting of her words, or from realizing his own helplessness to aid Lenore's cause. He mounts into his buggy and drives Jack and Jill up one street and down another, and cogitates. He allows the horses to proceed slowly - those handsome, well-matched horses that were the mother's grateful gift to the village doctor when he brought Rachel Saltonstall safely through a critical illness.

It has been hinted that the grateful woman would have given him the daughter herself. Yes, those wise ones who arrange their neighbors' affairs for them simply as a labor of love, do not hesitate to say that Dr. Lemist might, if he liked, aspire to the hand of Rachel Saltonstall. Be that as it may, the doctor is not thinking of Miss Saltonstall now, but of the little girl whom he would fain be kind to, and whom he fears he has driven out of the frying pan into the fire. Even Mrs. Fortune has bid him beware of her—"in spite of his years"—that was what she said. His face reddens as he recalls it, and he tightens his hold on the reins. The horses dart obediently forward.

"Whoa, Jack and Jill. Whoa. Cruel! cruel!" he mutters. "Confound the whole pack!" with rising indignation. "I can never escape them except through marriage, and I am beginning to believe that the cure is not worse than the disease. It's lucky she refused to drive home with me that day," he muses. "I suppose if she were to be seen in this buggy there would be the devil to pay!" and he glooms angrily at the horses' heads; but a more natural expression drives the frowning one from his kind open face as he sees who is trotting toward him up the street. It is Tim Nash, with Hepsy, bolt upright as usual, holding the reins. Beside her upon the seat, and equally upright, sits a very clean, and knowing-looking Scotch terrier. Hepsy is about to pass with a friendly nod, but the doctor stops his horses and she imitates the example. It is for such as Hepsy Nash that Dr. Lemist always stops, busy or no. The genial bachelor is not a lady's

man. The shining buggy has never been even for a half an hour at the disposal of a young and pretty woman, which made it the more effusively friendly in him to offer it a few days since to Lenore; but to catch up a belated passenger and deposit her at the depot; to take a rheumatic old lady out for an airing; to save the legs of a bent old man in climbing a hill which might happen to be in the doctor's way—these are the offices which the neat vehicle is often called to perform, and Hepsy herself in time of weakness has experienced its hospitality.

"Good day, Hepsy," is the doctor's greeting; "what have you there?"

"Well," replies Miss Nash, with a rather dubious glance at her companion, "it's a dog."

"So I see; but whose dog?"

"That's what I want to know," returns Hepsy. "He appeared a few nights ago at my place, and he's stuck to me ever since like a burr. If I only liked dogs it would be different."

"He's a bright-looking, clean, little fellow."

"Bright!" repeats Hepsy, "why, that dog thinks he knows it all. He drove off two tramps that wanted to rob my hen-roost the very first night he come, and since then he don't seem to think but what he's got to run the whole farm," and she casts a sidelong glance of ill-concealed admiration at the rough little animal, who is listening, his head on one side and his bright eyes fixed faithfully on hers. "Oh yes, he's clean. If I'd got to have him 'round I was bound I'd have him clean, but it was a fight for it, wasn't it, Ino?"

The terrier's wiggling nose and ears speak volumes. "Not bein' used to dogs, and not likin' 'em, I hated like fury to put him into one o' my clean wash-tubs, and then, to tell the truth, I was n't any too certain he would n't bite me; but I put on a pair o' leather gloves, and says I, 'Get into that tub!'"

At his mistress' severe tone Ino immediately sits up on his hind legs and raises his fore-paws behind his ears. Dr. Lemist bursts into a hearty laugh.

"There," continues Hepsy, delightedly, "that's just what he done then. He just begged off, an' begged off until I had to pick him up at last and put him in with my own hands. Then I jumped up on a chair till I seen what he was goin' to do; but he only stood there in the water lookin' pretty sheepish, so I plucked up courage and come down and washed him."

"Thoroughly, I'll be bound."

"Well, yes," acknowledges Hepsy, complacently, viewing the rough, clean coat, "I did soap him to all intents and purposes."

The terrier, who has lowered his fore-feet, looks away and droops his ears as one who finds the conversation personal and uncomfortable.

"See, he hates to think of it, even now," she remarks, musingly. "He didn't get his spirits back until he was dry as sawdust. I feel too silly," she adds, "drivin' through the streets with him settin' alongside o' me; but there, you never see anything so bound to go anywheres as he was to come into Alderley to-day. You might think, the way he performed around, barkin' and beggin', that I had n't ever drove

without him an' did n't know how to, and whenever I go in anywheres, he sets up and looks savage if anybody 30 much as comes near the wagon."

"He is evidently a very valuable dog," remarks the doctor when she pauses. Hepsy draws her lips down and tries not to look delighted.

"For one that likes dogs," she adds depreciatingly.

"Some one is probably mourning him sincerely. How are you going to find the owner?"

Hepsy's face falls with ludicrous suddenness. "To find the owner?" she repeats, aghast.

"Yes. I suppose, of course, you intend to advertise."

"I-I had n't thought about it. I-I-"

"Of course. You are not used to that sort of thing," says the doctor, misinterpreting her hesitation, and pulling out a note-book. "I will attend to it for you. Let us see. How shall we word it? Found, a Scotch terrier dog. Has been taught tricks. Owner can have him by sending description of these to Miss Heps—"

"No, no, doctor!" exclaims Hepsy, wildly. "Don't tell 'em where I live. I mean, if you'll be so obligin', let 'em send the description to you."

"Just as well, just as well, and now let us see. Probably the little fellow can shake hands. Give us your paw, sir," reaching across to the wagon; but the dog glances back rather contemptuously and does not stir. "You ask him, Hepsy. He doesn't know me."

Hepsy, her face very long and narrow, gravely holds

out her hand. "Can you shake hands?" she inquires. For answer the terrier promptly gives her his paw, which she shakes with an involuntary smile, ejaculating, "There, now! Forever!"

"Probably he will give the other one," suggests the doctor, and upon being solicited, the terrier does give his other paw, although looking away with a bored air which plainly indicates that he would have been as well pleased to have this accomplishment remain unsuspected.

"Very well, then," continues the doctor, referring again to his note-book, "I will attend to this for you with pleasure."

"Thank you," returns Hepsy, reluctantly. "I s'pose honesty's the best policy."

"Especially," adds the doctor, "when it rids you of a troublesome incumbrance."

"I don't know,—perhaps he would n't be so much trouble when I once got used to him. You can get used to anything. Law, when I first went onto the farm I didn't think I should ever get used to livin' alone up there, but now no other place looks so temptin' to me."

"Do you see anything of your old friend, Miss Belden?"

"No," responds Hepsy. "My old friend and me don't trouble each other much."

"Have you seen—her niece?" inquires the doctor, after a moment's hesitation.

" Yes!"

Dr. Lemist winks as though the curt reply were a missile.

"Well? What have you to say about her?"

"Nothin' special, only that she favors her pa."

"Hepsy, I had hoped, from an old friend of the family and an honest woman like yourself, that I should hear a kind word spoken for that child," returns the doctor, hotly. "I pity her, and I admire her."

"I aint a bit afraid but what your sect will admire her," remarks Hepsy, drily. "That aint goin' to help her any."

"Have you gone crazy, too?" he retorts. "Where is your common sense?"

is your common sense!

"O, I've got plenty o' sense. I'm just bilin' over with it."

"Then don't talk in that way. Somebody must befriend that girl or she will pine away. I am old enough to be her father, and—"

"Yes, but you aint old enough to be father to every other young woman in the village, and they aint goin' to stand it to have you praisin' an intruder like they consider her. Don't you go to playin' the father trick," adds Miss Nash, "an' excuse my speakin' plain."

Dr. Lemist reddens and starts to speak, but Hepsy continues:

"You aint her father, and that makes all the difference in the world. You're kind, and if you was only a woman you could do wonders for that poor little lamb; but bein' a man, an' a single one at that, you can only do her harm."

"Well, that is about the conclusion I had come to

just before meeting you," acknowledges the doctor; "and now I must be going on. At any rate, I am glad she has a friend in you," and, after one or two more commonplaces, the two drive past one another with rather conservative nods, each having unconsciously made the other supremely uncomfortable.

"It is rather hard," thinks the doctor, "that by avoiding that lonely child is the only way I can be allowed to express good intention toward her. However, what must be, must be. I can avoid her with a great deal more ease than I can meet her."

But perverse fortune delights in contradicting these flat statements. Just as Dr. Lemist has decided this matter, a small, slow-stepping figure comes within his line of vision, and in the white dress and broad hat he has no difficulty in recognizing Lenore. A sudden desire fills him to see whether those dark eyes are as sad and wistful as when he last saw them. He tightens the reins and Jack and Jill spring forward, and only stop when they reach the slight, white figure.

Lenore pauses with alacrity.

"On your way to the lesson?" asks the doctor, looking with kindly scrutiny into the uplifted dark face, and finding nothing reassuring in its wistful expression.

"Yes. Ah!" with an admiring look at Jack and Jill, "What a fine thing it must be to drive about all day as you do, Dr. Lemist."

"But not so fine a thing to be driving about all right, Miss Fayette," is the cheery response, as the

doctor gallantly resists the temptation to take advantage of the girl's evident willingness to accept a second invitation if it should be offered. "Never envy necountry doctor—anything," he adds, with emphasis. "I met Mr. Burley this morning, and he told me he should go to-day to see your Aunt and ask her if she would take him in for a time."

Lenore's eyebrows rise tragically, and she exclaims. "He was on his way to the same errand the day he met you in the grounds. Somebody had told him that Miss Belden had plenty of room and might be willing to receive him." The doctor pauses, and shifts his position uncomfortably. "I—I hardly know how to speak of it, Miss Fayette, without appearing to meddle."

"Oh, but do not hesitate to say what you like to me."

"Well, then, your interview with Mr. Burley was overseen by a—party who mentioned it to me, and if I were you I would relate the occurrence some day when you are at Mrs. Fortune's, and explain how he happened to be with you. I give you the hint with the friendliest motives," he adds, meeting Lenore's clear, honest gaze.

"Then that was not customary; not what Americans consider proper. I did not know. You have such strange ways."

It is the first time Lenore has failed to identify herself with America, and that she does so now is significant of the depression that is settling upon her. The doctor mutters something between his teeth.

"It was perfectly proper, under the circumstances, but you have been unfortunate enough to fall into a tattling village where your least action will be criticized. Good afternoon—I mean good morning," he finishes abruptly, considering with a glow of confused indignation that his own action in keeping the girl standing in the open street to talk to himself is about as poor a service as he can render her.

"It would have been only common politeness in Dr. Lemist to offer to drive me to Mrs. Fortune's," thinks Lenore, left to pursue her solitary walk, "but I have not found much of that here. And how very absurd of Mrs. Fortune to vex herself about me and Mr. Burley, when I have only seen him once since that day in the garden, and then but to bow to him. However, since that kind doctor desires it, I shall follow his suggestion. He likes me and wants to be kind, that's plain, and I am grateful—if he only had asked me to drive this lovely morning."

But here the girl's attention is diverted by the spectacle of a span of small black horses coming toward her, drawing a handsomely appointed basket-carriage. Within sits one of the most striking looking persons Lenore has ever seen—an elegantly dressed woman, she perceives at once; handsome and distinguished; but whether old or young, is the puzzling question which it would be hard for any one to determine at short notice, and just now the bad behavior of one of the ponies, which is engrossing the attention of the fair driver, attracts that of Lenore also.

## CHAPTER X.

## RACHEL SALTONSTALL.

THE lady in the carriage leans forward and takes the whip from its place; but by an untoward movement it slips from her hand into the street. There is no one in sight but Lenore, the horse is growing every moment more unmanageable, and before the lady can send even a look of request toward her the young girl has run into the middle of the road, picked up the whip, and hurried after the carriage, whose prancing steeds are making very little headway.

The lady only bows as she takes the whip, intent on the gentle chastisement which she administers with a steady hand to the offender, speaking meanwhile as one would do to a fractious child.

Lenore looks after her with interest, noting how the ponies settle obediently into a steady gait, then she goes back to the sidewalk, and continues on her way.

How pretty it all was; the dainty carriage, the spirited ponies, and the handsome mistress of it all, with the grey hair waving back from her fair, proud face. "Heigho! There are pleasanter lots than that of a poor orphan, obliged to be grateful for the opportunity of teaching such people as the Fortunes," thinks Lenore, when, with an almost noiseless sweep on the soft road, the very turn-out which she has been admir-

ing, draws up to the walk, beside her, and the stately figure of the grey-haired lady leans forward with a gracious bend of the head:

"I had not time to thank you for your kindness," she says, in a low, distinct voice, as she meets Lenore's surprised look.

"I was very glad to help you," returns the young girl. "Were you frightened?"

The pretty accent brings a new interest into the face of the lady addressed. She smiles a little for the first time.

"No. One of my ponies has rather a fretful disposition and indulges it sometimes. If you will let me drive you to your destination you will see that his naughty freak will not return."

As she speaks, the lady moves a little on the seat, and turns the embroidered covering away from the vacant place.

It does not occur to Lenore to decline the offer. She is fascinated by the dark eyes bent kindly upon her, and feels quite a fluttering of the heart as she takes the offered seat, and the ponies start.

"Now I hope Charlie and Dick will retrieve their reputations," says the lady, pleasantly.

"It is beautiful," sighs Lenore, delighted at the smooth, swift motion.

Her companion takes a quick look at the dark face. "Where were you going? Are you hurried?"

"I was going to give a lesson, but it can be postponed," returns Lenore, recklessly. "I am not hur-'ed—not at all." The other smiles and turns the horses down a side street.

"Then let us see some of the pretty views upon which we pride ourselves," she says, looking into Lenore's sparkling eyes. "You are, of course, a stranger in Alderley."

"Hardly that, now. I have been at Elmdale a long time."

"Do you say you live at Elmdale?"

"I am staying there. It ought to be my home, but I do not know. If I have a home at all, it is there. I am the granddaughter of the late Squire."

"I thought so. You are Nora's daughter. I forget her husband's name."

"It must be that she is old," thinks Lenore. "She knew my mother."

"Fayette," she says, aloud. "Yes, I am Lenore Fayette."

"And Miss Belden does not allow you to feel at home? Strange."

"O, the poor thing! I do trouble her so," sighs Lenore.

"What do you do?"

"I teach French, for one thing."

"Is that a heinous offence?" asks the lady, smiling.
Lenore shrugs her shoulders. "It is the worst I
do, but she says her prayers very loud and asks for
strength to bear her trials with me. Frankly, I am
growing very tired of it."

"Frankly, I should think you would be," answers her companion with a laugh, then a sudden exclama-

tion, and a lighting of the proud face causes Lenore to follow the direction of her friend's gaze, and she sees Alan Burley coming along the shaded street.

The ponies are drawn to a standstill beside the walk. "Alan!" exclaims the low voice, and a hand in its dainty driving-glove is outstretched.

"Well, Rachel, at last," returns the young man, taking the hand and retaining it, while he includes Lenore in his greeting.

"She is young!" thinks Lenore with a sudden certainty.

"Still the humblest of your slaves, you see," he continues, returning rather coolly the ardent look fixed upon him.

"What better way to prove it than by waiting your pleasure in a dull village for a couple of weeks?"

"Have you been here so long! I wrote you of our disappointment in not being able to get into the house so early as we expected."

"Did you? I did n't receive the letter. No matter. It has been all right. But I tired of the Alderley House, and this afternoon, Miss Fayette," he continues, smiling and looking at the brilliant bunch of flowers in the girl's belt, "I have been applying for admittance at the Sign of the Scarlet Geranium."

"With what success?" asks Lenore, anxiously.

"None."

"Oh, I am so glad," she exclaims, the sincerity of her relief distinctly audible in her voice.

"That is most unkind of you."

"No, it is not."

"Miss Saltonstall will tell you that I am an easy fellow to get along with," he continues.

Miss Saltonstall! Lenore looks at her companion with curiosity and a little awe. Can it be that she is driving and conversing easily with so great a personage?

The lady does not notice her surprise.

"It is just as well," she says to Alan, "for of course now you are coming right home to us. You are looking a great deal better."

"You surely did not expect to see me quite so cadaverous as when we last met. I am well, but I shall humor myself for a month or so yet. Where are you bound?"

"I was about to drive Miss Fayette to Hillside Farm. It is a pleasant drive, and I have an errand there," says Miss Saltonstall, "but," hesitatingly, "the errand can wait."

"And so can I," adds Lenore quickly. "Do not think of me. Let me give my place to your friend," and she starts to leave the carriage.

"No, no," interposes Alan, quietly. "Why change your plan? Aunt Catherine will receive me if I go to the house, Rachel?"

"Yes, gladly; and you will find your rooms ready for you; but I feel that you have been treated so shabbily I would rather—"

"And so would I," interrupts Lenore, anxiously.

Inexperienced child that she is, she feels painfully conscious of being in the way.

"But I would not," says Alan; "I am most anx

ious you should go on to Hillside Farm, and convey my compliments to Miss Nash."

"Do you know Hepsy Nash?" inquires Lenore, open-eyed.

"Intimately," replies Alan. "We are very much attached to one another.

Lenore laughs. "She has invited me to come to the farm to see her."

"So she has me," returns Burley, complacently.

"What are you talking about?" inquires Miss Saltonstall. "Well, since we are to go—"

Alan lifts his hat and backs away to let the phæton proceed.

"Au revoir," says Rachel, with a look over her shoulder as the horses start, which heightens Lenore's consciousness of being a marplot. But if her companion is annoyed she does not allow it to appear. No one could be more gracefully entertaining than she, during the drive up the mountain; but for a long time the conversation is impersonal. She seems to have forgotten her interest in Lenore's daily life. She talks of the view from Bald Head, of some wonderful ferns that flourish near its summit, and finally takes up the subject of Alan Burley.

"I wonder if I am to find my cousin quite au fait of Alderley. How, for instance, has he managed to know you?" she asks pleasantly.

Lenore smiles in response, and blushes, unconsciously, as a child colors. "He found me crying one day in the grounds at Elmdale. I do not very often cry, either, but that day I was very much discouraged. So he spoke to me and gave me some good advice."

Miss Saltonstall looks surprised. "I can not picture it," she says.

"He suggested my teaching as a means of independence. So I attempted to find pupils and secured two—your house-keeper and her daughter."

Rachel raises her eyebrows. "Indeed? And are they your only ones?"

"Yes, but they serve a very good purpose," remarks Lenore, trenchantly.

Miss Saltonstall smiles. There is a candor and nonchalance about this girl that is very attractive,—too attractive, perhaps, when she pictures those large eyes, tear-wet, and Alan Burley standing above them, administering good advice.

"And that, I believe, is the only time I have seen Mr. Burley until to-day," continues Lenore.

She "believes" Rachel looks at her suspiciously for a quick instant.

"I am glad to see that he is looking a great deal better," she says quietly.

"He has been very ill, I hear," replies Lenore.

"Ill unto death," says the other, speaking with feeling. "My mother and I feel very near to him. We were in the city at the time, but knew nothing of his sudden illness until he had been taken to a hospital!"

The lady shudders with horror, and Lenore gives vent to a sympathetic exclamation.

"It was a comfortable place, and doubtless he recovered there when he would not have done so with us; but all the same it was a trial to us to think of

him among strangers. The first suspicion I had of his illness was on a Sunday when I went to the church where he was to sing, on purpose to hear him. He was not there. I made inquiries, but could not learn the reason of his absence, so sent to his hotel only to learn of his removal to the hospital. My mother went there immediately, but already he was too weak to be moved."

Miss Saltonstall pauses, and Lenore responds unwarily in French.

"Should you like better to have me talk to you in your own language?" asks her companion.

"The English is my own language," replies the girl with some heat.

Rachel smiles and nods. "Your mother's country is your mother-country, is it? That is right; but who is that ahead of us? I think that figure is unmistakable."

They are ascending the winding mountain drive, shaded by luxuriant overhanging boughs, with here and there beside the road, or visible through the trees, jagged or rounded shoulders of rock, partially concealed by the ferns whose roots cling close to the granite, their drooping fronds softening all hardness of outline, and in their turn receiving the benefit of the gray back-ground which throws out their vivid and varying greens in beautiful contrast. The rollicking brook rushes by them in its busy hurry, here plunging regardless of consequences across an old tree-stump, uplifting gnarled arms to impede its progress; there turning out for a bowlder with whose dignified right of

way it would be waste of time to quarrel, now diving into the earth where its noisy gurgle is hushed to a mysterious whisper, and from whence it reappears quieted and deepened and darkened, only to forget its brief awe in a sudden opportunity to turn a riotous series of somersaults down a rocky declivity that lies temptingly in the way.

"Yes, I am sure that is Hepsy," continues Miss Saltonstall, peering short sightedly up the hill at the wagon where sits Miss Nash, upright as ever, while her companion succumbing to the lulling effect of Tim's up-hill gait and the certainty of the safety of his mistress's goods, has relapsed into well-earned slumber.

slumber.

"Get up Dick, Charlie,—Hepsy!" raising her voice, at which Hepsy turns quickly around and the terrier starts up, uttering three short barks.

"Now you be still!" orders Miss Nash peremptorily. "There aint the smallest excuse for you to get up a fight with anybody. That's Miss Saltonstall if I see correctly, and," her face breaking into a broad smile, "if she haint got Lenore, ridin' her out. Now there. How do you do Miss Saltonstall. I am glad enough to see you back. Lenore, how do you do, little girl?"

Lenore smiles into the beaming, benevolent face, "You see how well I do—having such beautiful drive."

"An' its a good thing too. Young folks had ought to have a good time, an' it was clever in Miss Salton stall to think of it."

"I did not think of it, it happened," answers Rachel, only half comprehending Hepsy's concern. "I was on my way to find you; Mrs. Fortune wished you to be informed of our return so you would include us in your regular round, perhaps to the exclusion of somebody else; but I do not wish that to happen. Understand me."

"O, I understand you," remarks Hepsy, leniently, her tone implying that she shall maintain unshaken her prerogative of doing as she pleases.

"What a bright little dog you have. What is his

name?"

"Well, I don't know what his name is," replies Miss Nash, beginning to look troubled. "I don't know who he is. He's makin' it his home with me for the present. I've heard folks make jokes about bein' adopted by dogs an' such like, but I never expected to be brought to it myself, me that never has liked dogs, an' never hardly spoke to one. He's adopted me to all intents and purposes."

"But he ought to have a name," sugests Lenore with interest. "What do you do when you want to call him?"

"I don't never get a chance to call him," replies Hepsy drily. "He don't never get far enough off. I've kinder named him Ino though."

" Ino!"

"Yes, I thought that was fittin', for if ever a dog thought he knew it all, he does. Beg, sir!"

"O, the cunning thing!" exclaims Lenore as the terrier promptly obeys. Hepsy draws down the corpers of her lips and tries not to smile.

"Shake hands," she continues, and again Lenore exclaims and laughs.

"See, he looks ashamed," says the girl, pointing at the hang-dog air with which Ino complies.

"Yes, I know. Somehow or other he hates to shake hands — seems to make him feel meaner'n pusley. I don't know why, either, unless it is that it makes him mad to think he haint got no grip!"

"He is evidently a very valuable dog;" says Rachel upon which repetition of Dr. Lemist's remark, Hep-

sy's face looks narrow and downcast.

"Well, so he may be," she replies, mechanically, "for any one that likes—anyway I've advertised him. G'lang Tim," and slapping the reins on the horse's back, she takes an abrupt departure.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE WORLD IS SMALL.

HEER up," remarks Mrs. Fortune, coming into the sitting-room where her daughter is engaged in writing, "you are wanted in the parlor. Now you are happy, I am sure."

"I don't see why you need speak that way, ma," says Miss Fortune, sliding the scribbled sheets of paper into an old atlas. "Of course I like to go into the parlor. Why should n't I?"

"Humph!" ejaculates her mother, seating herself at some work, "you cannot pick a quarrel with me on that score."

"Quarrel!" repeats the other, looking so bewildered that her mother gives a little stamp of vexation.

"For mercy's sake don't stare so. Go. You are wasting precious time; and be sure you take your pattern books with you, for of course that is all you are wanted for."

"Yes, I suppose so," assents Miss Fortune, meekly, at a loss to account for her mother's impatience. "Mrs. Saltonstall says she depends upon me entirely for new ideas, and I'm sure I'm very glad to be so useful to her, even if it is only in the matter of fancy work."

"Pious child!" responds her mother. "Go and fulfill your high mission."

And Miss Fortune goes. When it comes to a war of words with her mother, there is nothing for her to hope but utter rout and discomfiture.

She finds Mrs. Saltonstall in her accustomed place by a pleasant, low window, surrounded by wools of rainbow shades at which she is staring in placid helplessness.

"Ah, there you are," she says in a tone of relief, looking up and observing Miss Fortune, "I want you to sort these, if you will, and start me on that Afghan."

It is a pleasant room to which the girl has been summoned. The parlor of a summer home where all is designed for comfort and ease.

The softest of rugs and the lightest furniture of wicker or bamboo adorn it. Violet and rose-colored lights fall through the stained windows, and all about are signs of pleasant occupation. Sheet music lies in shallow piles upon the piano, strips of half finished silk embroidery in gorgeous colors hang over a work stand, and on a cloudy or cool day, such as sometimes come in this part of the world even in mid-summer, a wood fire burns in the tiled fire-place. The pictures on the walls are water colors and etchings; an autumn landscape with a sheet of water in the foreground; a forest filled with penetrating sunshine; a coquettish head beneath a Japanese parasol; there are no heavy subjects to deal with in Mrs. Saktonstall's summer parlor.

No wonder Miss Fortune is glad to escape from the absolute quiet or sarcasm which prevails in her own part of the house by coming here; and many a time she has occasion to feel thankful for the proficiency in various forms of fancy work, which has won her way into Mrs. Saltonstall's favor.

Rachel is sitting at the piano with Mr. Burley beside her as Miss Fortune enters, and the latter pauses on the threshold. She has not expected to find him here. The thought of meeting him is an awful one. Are not his features, even to the curve of his moustache, described within the leaves of that old atlas she has just locked away; the swing of his gait, the heartiness of his laugh, the waviness of his hair above the forehead where it is allowed to attain a length of two inches, the very whiteness of his teeth are all embalmed in those pages, and the consciousness of her guilt is just now overwhelming to the embarrassed authoress.

"Come in," repeats Mrs. Saltonstall as her daughter gives the newcomer a rather formal bow, "Mr. Burley, Miss Fortune. Come here, my dear, I forget entirely how many stitches you told me to set up for the first stripe."

"The parrot in person," thinks Mr. Burley, as he bows toward the round eyes that are regarding him with so much awe.

"I think I have met Miss Fortune before," he says, with a smile which that young woman mentally pronounces "divine" and which she forthwith determines to immortalize. "You saw me last in a very bad

temper," he continues, crossing to his aunt's corner and watching while she piles the wools into her assistant's lap. "I hope you will not remember it against me."

Miss Fortune blushes furiously. Why will he talk to her? Every word serves to inspire her with more painful shyness.

"What are you beginning with blue for?" inquires Mrs. Saltonstall, watching the plump hands with absorbed interest. "I am sure you told me black came first. Alan, go away dear, you unsettle us."

Mr. Burley little suspects the dire distress which his attention is causing.

"That is not so, is it, Miss Fortune," he asks, seating himself at his aunt's feet. "I am not incommoding you. It is a man's duty to cultivate himself and I want to see what you ladies mean when you talk about 'setting up."

Mrs. Saltonstall notes the unusual awkwardness of her oracle's motions, and stirs impatiently.

"What is the matter child? Your fingers are all thumbs."

Alan is amused at the girl's evident confusion. Miss Fortune is sure to arouse any latent love of teasing in persons with whom she comes in contact, but Mr. Burley, ignorant that he is the hero whom she admires at a distance and invests with so many virtues as to make his near presence a crushing incubus, tries good-naturedly to set her at her ease.

His first random remark strikes the right chord.

"Miss Fayette has spoken of you to me, Miss Fortune." 'The girl looks up at him with a pleased glance, while the skilled fingers settle down to their work with a deftness very soothing to the feelings of her impatient pupil.

Mr. Burley checks a smile. "I shall certainly say 'Polly wants a cracker' if she looks at me that way," he thinks.

"You know her then," she replies. "What did she say about me?"

"Only that she expected to teach you her language."

"Oh." There is a disappointed cadence in Miss Fortune's tone as she looks back at her work. "She is a lovely creature. At times all I can think of when I am with her is a sparkling little firefly, and then again, she seems very quiet, even unhappy. I assure you she isn't always a firefly. Sometimes she is as blue as a pigeon."

"Her aunt—perhaps," hints Alan, rather enjoying Miss Fortune's slow, honest speech, and willing to draw her out.

"I should say so," she responds earnestly. "I used to think Miss Belden a pattern woman. But she is a regular Gorgon! I have put her into my—" a sudden stop and a furious blush end this.

"Your what?"

"O, nothing. Please don't ask me," she implores, glancing up at him with a sidewise look so like the prototype Lenore has suggested, that he is guilty of the rudeness of laughing outright in her distressed face.

"I can not contradict you," he replies. "She re-

fused to take me in and do for me, you know, and that injured her reputation with me, naturally."

"It seems as though she might let her niece sing if she wants to," observes Miss Fortune, her eyes on her own busy fingers.

"Well, yes. That would appear like an innocent diversion."

"But she won't even allow that. She won't have her sing, and the dear little thing sings like a lark."

"What a combination that charming young person must be. I begin to realize how little I know her—a firefly, a pigeon, and a lark. Well, well," muses Alan.

Miss Fortune shakes her head. "You may tease me as much as you like on that subject. It will not trouble me. I am too fond of Miss Fayette."

Alan laughs, and is rising from his lowly seat, when the portière opposite is pulled aside and a young lady appears in the doorway. She is in traveling dress, but looks fresh, sweet, and dainty as she hesitates a moment on the threshold, a little questioning smile on her lips as she glances from one to another of the occupants of the room. It happens that Mr. Burley is the first to perceive her, and the sudden sight of the delicate face is the greatest shock of his life.

The laughter dies on his lips, and a great wonder settling into sternness comes over him as he realizes that the graceful lines of the vision belong not to a being of air, but to mortal, girlish loveliness.

Those soft grey eyes are the ones that in spite of himself have haunted his dreams for months. She

for whom he has felt constrained to search through the whole world has come to him, here, in this humdrum secluded village—come into the very house and room where he is. It seems an impossibility—a dream.

But the spell is broken as Rachel rises with a start

from the piano.

"Doris!" she exclaims, hurrying forward, while at the same moment Mrs. Saltonstall pushes away wools and teacher, and gains her feet more deliberately, "This is too bad!"

"O, not at all. Was it not my own doing?" responds the girl brightly. "I told you I could not tell when I should be able to come—that I would prefer to drop down upon you. How do you do, dear Mrs. Saltonstall?"—this a little timidly, for Doris is not certain that the sight of her may not open the floodgates so easily swung ajar. But to-day Mrs. Saltonstall has no idea of weeping. She likes good-looking and well-dressed young people, and is sincerely glad that Doris has come, and gives the girl a welcome which calls forth very tender gratitude. Meanwhile the other two occupants of the room view this scene according to their separate fashions. Miss Fortune, ever a slave to beauty, stares in open and wondering admiration at the stranger whose wondrous hair gleams sunnily above her wrinkleless black dress. Miss Fortune is far too unconscious to have it occur to her that she is only the housekeeper's daughter and that it would be discreet for her now to slip out of the room. On the contrary she watches, fascinated, the curves of the handsome lips which are exceedingly

mobile when Doris talks interestedly, as she is doing now to her hostess, while Rachel, leaving her mother to do the honors, hurries away to see what has become of the faithful Mary.

Mrs. Saltonstall, still holding her guest's gloved hand between her own plump ones turns back into the room, "Miss Fortune Miss Gale, and allow me to introduce my nephew, Mr. Alan Burley."

Doris' eyes pass from one to the other and linger upon the latter as he bows low and formally.

- "I think I have seen you before, Mr. Burley," she says graciously, and with an ease which he does not share. He lifts his eyes with a sudden, cold stare most strange to rest upon a creature so fair, and remains tongue-tied. "And heard you too," she continues archly. "It was in Steinway Hall," she adds, with a soft laugh, "I do not expect you to remember me."
  - "Oh—that is what you mean!" he exclaims.
- "Yes, certainly," regarding the pale, gloomy face with concealed wonder. "I applauded you heartily. I distinctly remember that I ripped a finger of my glove!"
- "Then, without doubt I owe you a pair of gloves, Miss Gale."
- "What a stiff creature! but he looks ill," she thinks as she turns away. "Yes, thank you, Mrs. Saltonstall, I will go up stairs. I have a hazy idea that I had a trunk when I left New York. I know absolutely nothing about it now, but probably Mary does."

Mr. Burley still stands staring at the portière which drops behind his aunt and her guest for a minute after they are gone. Miss Fortune, by no means piqued, but rather relieved by his evident forgetfulness of her existence, watches him with a sidewise, sentimental scrutiny which in no way interferes with the certainty of her flying fingers.

Silence is still unbroken, he is still posing as a monument of stern amazement, in the self-same spot where he obtained his first glimpse of Miss Gale, when Rachel comes back.

"I declare that young woman has caused quite a commotion," she begins, but pauses, catching sight of her cousin's face. "Alan, you are suffering!" she exclaims, tenderly. "You are very pale. Come here to the lounge. I insist on your lying down."

But Mr. Burley, never particularly appreciative of petting, and peculiarly irritable at the present moment, rebels with ungracious brusqueness.

"Nonsense, I am perfectly well unless you persuade me that I am on the brink of the grave, as you seem determined to do. Where did you pick up this—this Miss Gale?"

Miss Saltonstall looks at him with grave, wondering eyes, and her face betrays her hurt as she turns and passes quietly by him to the piano and begins piling up the scattered music.

"We did not pick her up," she returns, calmly, considering how painfully her heart is beating. It is the first unkindness she has received from the man she loves.

Miss Fortune may be obtuse, but the dead silence that follows would enlighten the densest brain. She rises precipitately, drops a worsted ball which unwinds its way to Mr. Burley's feet and which he picks up and hands to her, unconscious of her stuttered thanks, and escape from the room, although she does not effect the latter before overturning a foot-stool and becoming so enmeshed in an intricate labyrinth of gay worsteds as to resemble a variegated edition of The Lady of Shalott.

"Rachel," he exclaims at last, "I ask your pardon for speaking so brusquely, but do tell me how it is that I have never heard you speak of this young lady."

"I think had you listened you would have heard her mentioned often enough during the last week," replies Rachel, keenly conscious of her cousin's failure to wait until she should grant his pardon before pursuing his inquiries.

"Yes, you said Miss Gale. That is so. You said Miss Gale was coming," he says musingly.

For another minute there is silence, at the end of which time Mr. Burley recovers from his preoccupation sufficiently to realize that his cousin has finished her task at the piano and is seated by a window engrossed in a book.

"Look here, Rachel dear," he says approaching and audaciously passing his hand over the page, "attend to me like a good girl. I am not nearly ready to stop asking questions."

Miss Saltonstall lowers her book and looks up at him; but it is not the sort of look he is accustomed

to receive from her. Rachel Saltonstall belongs to the superb order of women, and a very quenching expression can shine forth from the brown eyes set so nobly beneath her grey hair.

"Confound it, Rachel, I have been behaving like a brute!" he exclaims, sinking on one knee at her side. "But see how I wilt at having deserved your displeasure. What have I been saying! I feel like a person who has been moving in a dream for the past ten minutes. What have I been doing?"

Miss Saltonstall smiles a little sarcastically, "Behaving like the spoiled child you are. I suppose perhaps it is not your fault."

"That's lucky for me, but whose is it then?"

"Our's, everybody's. You are always much too well treated. But I am disappointed for I thought you could stand it."

"O come! Don't bear down on a fellow; I admit that you are always too kind to me, and that I never did anything to deserve it except to admire you more than any woman in the world."

Rachel contracts her lips slightly and raises her eyebrows, but her eyes are smiling and she permits the speaker to emphasize his speech by a light kiss on the hand that rests nearest him. Then he rises and taking a more prosaic position in a chair which he draws forward for the purpose, returns to the charge.

"But this—Miss Gale, Rachel, tell me about her."
"Well, we—'picked her up' a few years ago. Though
why you should make use of a slighting, ill-natured
expression in connection with her, puzzles me," and

Miss Saltonstall studies his face, natural enough now but for an earnest, yet displeased look. "Do you know her?"

- "No. Still we had a mutual friend."
- "Who has given you a bad report of her?"
- "Now don't look that way, Rachel. Down with that upper lip, and down from your pedestal generally! You need not be on the defensive. My friend loved her as the apple of his eye."
  - "Why do you say loved?"
- "My cousin, you are a true Yankee maiden. Do you intend to keep on all the afternoon replying to my questions by others? Tell me a little about Miss Gale. If we are to reside under the same roof, I should like a little foreknowledge of her from a more temperate informant than the one I have already listened to."

Miss Saltonstall smiles, closes her book obligingly, and begins to rock gently in her chair with her head resting against its high, cushioned back.

"Her story is quite peculiar and romantic," she replies. "When a child she lived with her mother in a small village in Maine, and one day when she was out on some errand she came face to face with a sharpeyed old woman who walked with a cane — a figure familiar on those streets, and highly respected. It was Miss Lockett, a rich spinster who lived in lonely state in a large old house, the interior of which not a dozen persons in the village had seen in twenty years. The old lady put out her cane in a witch-like manner, stopped the child and asked her name, and completed

the latter's dismay by exacting a promise from her to take tea at the great house on the following evening. When the time came, Doris, with a quaking heart, presented herself. Miss Lockett made her welcome very kindly, and gave her more dainties, and showed her more pretty sights and sounds-pictures, musicboxes, etc., than the child had ever dreamed of, and sent her home with a glittering ring on her finger, that her hostess had worn years before. That was the secret of it all. Miss Lockett fancied, or it might have been really so, that Doris was an image of herself as a child, and until she died she carried out her lavish kindness toward her, seeming to find the greatest com fort in the girl's companionship, and when the end came, all her money which had previously been willed to charities was found to have been transferred to her protégé under the guardianship of a certain Dr. Reid whose acquaintance Doris had made at her fairy godmother's house. It was while she was at school that she and Miriam met and grew to be close friends, and in that way of course we came to know her; but since Miriam left us we have not seen Doris until very recently when we met at a hotel in New York, and mother invited her to visit us here."

Alan has listened, gazing straight at the speaker, and now nods a brusque assent—the assent of one who hears a hackneyed story.

"That tallies," he says, as if to himself, "I have not been dreaming," then as Miss Saltonstall's surprised glance meets his, "It is the same young lady, Doris was the name; and what is your opinion of her, Rachel?" "Alan, I think you are crazy this afternoon," she replies impatiently. "My opinion is sufficiently plain in the fact that she is my guest. Is this investigating manner your usual one when making fresh acquaintances? Do you wish Miss Gale to give a reference?"

But Mr. Burley does not reply to this sarcasm. He rises and paces the floor, being absorbed in a brown study long before his cousin has brought out her last question.

Miss Saltonstall stares at him, shrugs her shoulders, and reopens her book. This time he does not dissuade her; but the printed page, albeit full of wisdom and food for thought, offers her no idea that can divert her mind from the wonder and reluctant suspicion instilled into it by her cousin's extraordinary behavior.

She recalls Miss Gale's own actions at the hotel. Her mother as well as herself was startled by the girl's strange manner.

But Miss Saltonstall fights the temptation to dwell upon this, and to wonder what light Mr. Burley could throw, were he to betray his unknown friend's confidence. She allows herself one impulsive question, regretted as soon as formed.

"Alan, did you know Miss Gale's guardian, Dr. Reid?"

Mr. Burley stops in his energetic promenade, and looks into her upturned face.

"Yes," he replies, shortly, and resumes his march.

# CHAPTER XII.

#### A NEW ERA.

T does not take much under any circumstances to astonish Miss Fortune, and she sees something the following afternoon from her mother's sitting-room window, which absolutely deprives her of the power of speech or motion for minutes. She is waiting with the utmost eagerness for the arrival of Miss Fayette, for this is a lesson day. She has so much to tell her. So much has happened. The wildly exciting event of the interrupted conversation with Mr. Burley, and the advent of Miss Gale. The first is to be repeated verbatim. Miss Fortune knows that Lenore will listen with wide-awake interest. Lenore likes Mr. Burley; and the second—as she watches, the young woman decides how she shall describe the lovely stranger who appeared in their midst suddenly and unannounced on yesterday. Up to to-day the charms of the heroine enshrined in the old atlas locked into Miss Fortune's desk have all been of a brunette tendency. The rav ishing Miss Helen Helincourt has been of an unusual height and regal grace. Her eyes have been darkest brown, and she has carried herself as nearly like Rachel Saltonstall as Miss Fortune could make her; but to-day has worked singular changes in the idol of Helincourt Grange. Her walk is not what it was, in fact a mere

circumstance compared with the surpassing roundness and grace of her figure and the fit and hang of her clothes. She has been ruthlessly scalped and fitted to a wig which has cost her creator minutes of concentrated labor to describe. Her "orbs, the hue of night," have turned grey in the ordeal, and are now, according to Miss Fortune, "hard and steely, or soft and pleading at their owner's will!"

Poor Miss Fortune's imagination has been kept on such short commons up to the arrival of the Saltonstalls, it is little wonder that she revels now in the fields of fancy that lie open to her; and it is with the most generous eagerness that she desires to make Lenore a sharer of her joys. She even wishes that the little French girl had, like herself, some ability which should prove to her an open sesame to the enchanted realm lying beyond the door of the housekeeper's apartments. These are in a wing, and from the window where Miss Fortune is standing she can see the curving corner of the roomy, covered piazza at the front of the house. Presently Miss Gale comes walking down into sight. She is alone, and stands toying with the lovely scarlet flower that grows on the festooned vine above her. She is dressed in something thin and of a heliotrope tint, and Miss Fortune fairly flattens her nose against the pane in order to get a full view of the gown on Miss Helen Helincourt's account. All too soon the golden-haired vision vanishes, but in a minute more the delicate, floating draperies again come in sight. Miss Gale is sauntering down the path which leads to the road. Simultaneously with Miss

Fortune's second view of her, she sees Lenore Fayette's broad hat appear on the flight of stone steps which leads up from the street to the garden path.

"There, what a shame!" thinks Miss Fortune as she spies it. "Now they will meet before I have had a chance to tell Miss Fayette about her. However, it will only whet her curiosity to get a look at her. She will come in full of questions, the cunning little thing."

But it is now that something happens to astonish the watcher beyond all bounds.

Lenore comes up the steps, a little wearily under the heat of the sun. Miss Fortune contrasts the limpness of her brown and white checked gown with the beautiful, gauzy costume moving slowly, unconsciously, to meet it. She is only thinking of the dresses, but is speedily reminded of the persons within them by the fact that the two girls have stopped short when they come vis-à-vis, Lenore with a sudden upthrowing of the hands, and a start which is visible even from Miss Fortune's point of observation.

"She is surprised. Well, if I ever saw such an honest little creature!" she thinks, and it is her last calm, collected thought for some minutes, for, watching with all her eyes, she suddenly sees Miss Gale loose her hold on the trailing skirts she has been lifting, and, darting forward simultaneously, she and Lenore fall into a mutual embrace, close as it is protracted. The shade hat is bent and twisted when at last Miss Fayette lifts her head and wipes her happy eyes. Miss Fortune's round, expressionless gaze rests upon the

couple as they come up the path talking together, growing still more blank, if possible, when Lenore, instead of coming into the housekeeper's door, as usual, fails even to glance in that direction, but moves on with Miss Gale to the piazza and into the house.

For a little time Miss Fortune continues to stare at nothing, then turns slowly about and fixes the unblinking look upon her mother, who has just arranged her painting materials and sat down to them. Mrs. Fortune really enjoys her new accomplishment.

She meets her daughter's regard with an impatient exclamation.

"Well, what is it? You look like an owl in the daylight, my dear."

"I should like to make you guess what it is," is the reply, as Miss Fortune seeks the friendly support of a neighboring chair.

"Well, you never will, so out with it!"

"Miss Fayette —I have just seen Miss Fayette fall into Miss Gale's arms and cry over her, and now they have gone into the house together."

"They have!" Mrs. Fortune shakes her head with a deprecating smile. "What did I always tell you?" proceeding to copy the outline of a pansy from the one in the vase before her. "She is deep, that girl is."

"But, ma -- "

"Oh, the veriest gosling could hoodwink you! If she is the paragon you make her out, why is n't she here now, in the time that we have engaged from her? What right has she to go visiting, and under the very same roof with us at that, at this hour? Did she look at you, or make any gesture to excuse herself?"

"N-o," with exceeding reluctance.

"Very well!" with a spiteful wave of her paintbrush; "How clever you must feel, to have stood there for the last fifteen minutes, for all the world like a lover, to be treated in this way. Ten to one the girl never thinks of you again. She has found a new friend."

Tears stand now in the china-blue eyes, but Miss Fortune speaks intrepidly. "I hope she has, ma, and one who can do her more good than we can. She is a put-upon, unappreciated girl. I believe Dr. Lemist is the only—"

"Yes; there, again! She has turned his head as completely as she has yours. That man is just fool enough — it would be exactly the thing that a man of his age would do — to marry Lenore Fayette."

"Marry Miss Lenore!"

"Yes, marry Miss Lenore!" mocks Mrs. Fortune, contemptuously. "And you will have nobody but yourself to thank when he does it."

"Myself to thank!" repeats Miss Fortune, gradually falling into the helpless bewilderment to which her mother's sharp tongue quickly reduces her.

Happily, at this stage of the conversation there comes a rap at the door. Mrs. Fortune springs nimbly to answer it. Rapid motion is a relief to her, just now.

Miss Gale's maid, Mary, stands without, and handing in a loosely-folded note, bows and disappears.

"For you," says Mrs. Fortune, curtly, presenting it like a dagger to her daughter, who rises and casts her eye over its contents, coloring with pleasure.

"It is from Miss Gale, ma. She begs that we will excuse Miss Fayette from her lesson to-day, and says that Mrs. Saltonstall wants me, if I can make it convenient, to come into the parlor."

"You can't," still more curtly.

"Oh, ma!" The piteous disappointment and pleading in the voice would move a heart of stone, but to Mrs. Fortune, in her present mood, it is merely fuel to the flame of her wrath.

"Poor, abused child," she says sarcastically, returning to her painting. "You are doomed to remain with your unnatural parent. I have the strongest regard for Mrs. Saltonstall," with a stiff change of tone, "but I really cannot allow her to suppose that my daughter is at her beck and call at all hours of the day. I am in her employ, but you are not."

"No, I am not," speaks Miss Fortune, driven to unusual heat. "I am not employed by her, so my home, and food, and fire, and light are gratis; but she must not be allowed to suppose that I am grateful. That would be too humiliating to us. It is not to be thought of. Just remember, ma,"—daringly reverting to a forbidden subject—"remember how and where we were living at the time Mrs. Saltonstall heard of our condition. Compare this clean, airy home with—"

"And are you so dull as to suppose I do not compare it, not to the wretched place you are so fond of recalling, but to the house where I was employer, instead of employed?" Mrs. Fortune's restless eyes are glowing now, and she is confronting her daughter

as though she had suddenly found her worthy of her steel. "You, with your lack of ambition and spirit, what do you know of my suffering as I sit here, so near to those whose social equal I am, and yet separated from them as entirely as though I had committed some disgraceful act." Here she stops, as suddenly as she began, turning her back on her companion and resuming her painting.

Miss Fortune locks and unlocks her hands undecidedly, and gazes at her mother's back hair. It required that she should be told, in so many words, of her state of mind before she could approximately comprehend it. Her soft heart is touched. She reproaches herself for her own eagerness to escape to the parlor, where her mother is not welcomed. "But she would be welcome," thinks Miss Fortune. She suddenly recalls hearing Mrs. Saltonstall say, only vesterday, to her housekeeper, that she wished, whenever she found herself at leisure, that she would come and sit with her. "Nothing," continues Miss Fortune, within herself, "could be kinder than Mrs. Saltonstall, unless it is Miss Saltonstall, and I do wish ma would n't be bitter. Poor ma!" And so she stands for a minute twisting her hands together and not daring to speak, while her mother, her hand trembling from her unwonted outburst, makes a feint of continuing her work. Presently the latter speaks, without turning her head.

<sup>&</sup>quot;You may go into the parlor, if you like."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Not if I can do anything for you, ma," timidly.

<sup>&</sup>quot;I know you are consumed with curiosity to see

what they are doing with Miss Fayette in there. Don't make any talk about it; just go."

And Miss Fortune goes, moving slowly at first, but hurrying as the scene in the garden comes back upon her with full force, and her curiosity quickens,—a curiosity which is not doomed to a tedious existence, for as soon as Lenore perceives her, she rises and approaches, her impulsive manner and sparkling face betokening her happy excitement.

"You will forgive me for playing truant," she says, softly. "I was so overjoyed to meet Miss Gale again. We came over on the steamer together, and she was so kind, so kind. I had thought never to see her again, and you know, when we met, I could not leave her suddenly."

Lenore rattles this off with eloquent accompaniment of smiles and lifted eyebrows. Miss Fortune's pleased, kind manner is reassuring.

"I am sure I'm as glad as I can be," she replies slowly, glancing on to where Miss Gale and Rachel are examining a portfolio of etchings. Then Mrs. Saltonstall calls her, and Miss Fortune hastens to the rescue.

Lenore goes back to the seat by Alan which she vacated to greet her pupil, and takes up the thread of her narrative where she dropped it.

"And so, you see, I was so full of anticipation that I hardly knew how attached I was to her until we met to-day. I have had plenty of time to think over my trip and Miss Gale since I have been in Alderley. Oh!" with a sudden, soft burst of enthusiasm, "Is she not beautiful, Mr. Burley?"

Alan looks at the speaker amused. He has never seen Lenore until to-day. This joyful creature, with full, infantile lips constantly breaking into smiles, and eyes full of little rollicking, dancing stars, is widely different from Lenore weeping in a helpless quandary.

"What a headlong question, Miss Fayette."

"Of course; but, O Mr. Burley, it makes such a difference to me to have found her!"

"And to me."

"And to you? Ah! you are amusing yourself with me. You think me very foolish to be so stirred by trifles. But trifles are much to me in these days. Was it not strange? Think of my being so many days with Miss Gale, and our talking, and talking, and neither of us once saying the word Alderley. Be careful, Mr. Burley, you will break those glasses."

"I may now. I have done with them. I only had to use them while I was convalescing. It's rather a pity, too. I have been aware of quite a distinguished, professional feeling while wearing them," and adjusting the glasses, he looks through them at Lenore. "For instance, when I ask you to sing to us pretty soon, shall you not be much more likely to comply if I use this expression?"

"Me sing? Oh, no."

"Ah, but I know you can. I was enjoying a tête-àtête with Miss Fortune, yesterday, and amidst your other attractions she mentioned your voice. She is your hearty admirer."

"Poor Miss Fortune," says Lenore, deprecatingly.

She is so honest."

"Apparently. And she is inclined to be as enthusiastic about you as you are about Miss Gale."

Lenore looks herself scornfully over, then glances across the room at Doris. "Is she not the loveliest creature!" she exclaims, again. "Now, I never have anything fit to wear," she continues; "and it seems to me I am always cross when I go to give my lessons. Poor Miss Fortune."

"The chain is incomplete," says Alan, carelessly, recalling his gaze with an effort. "Miss Gale may become enamoured of Miss Saltonstall, but who, I ask you, who is to adore Miss Fortune?"

"You might," suggests Lenore, with a bright, saucy glance. "Have you no chivalry about you?" and she adds, her eyes full of mischief, "Then if Miss Saltonstall could be induced to regard you favorably, do you not see we should be 'like to a ring that has no end?"

"Miss Fayette, you need disciplining. I am going to suggest in audible tones, so the others will be compelled to join me, that you should sing us something."

Lenore lifts her lower lip and shrugs her shoulders.

"Suggest, by all means, if it amuses you."

"Do you mean to be obdurate?"

"Yes."

"Come, I will make a bargain with you," says Burley, magnanimously. "You sing now to us, and the next time we are alone together, I will sing to you."

Lenore's eyebrows rise phenomenally. "How do I know it will be worth hearing?" she says, indifferently.

Alan's laugh silences the conversation in the room, and attracts every eye to Lenore's blushing face.

"You are easily amused, sir!" she says, provoked.

"I am only thinking how much you will enjoy it when I do sing," replies the other, resuming his low tone, while the general conversation is taken up. "I am a tenore robusto," he adds, rolling his r's thrillingly.

"I do not care if you are," returns Lenore, calmly;
"I cannot bear tenor singers—always straining for high notes that they do not quite reach, and swelling out their necks and getting red in the face."

"Oh, this is too much!" exclaims her companion.

"Er—Miss Saltonstall," he adds, raising his voice,

"Miss Fayette has just kindly consented to sing
for us."

"Ah, so good of you, Miss Lenore," murmurs Rachel, rising slowly.

"So sweet of you," utters Miss Fortune, in the same breath.

"No, I have not," asserts Lenore, with heightened color. "I cannot, thank you," she adds, more politely, remembering that she is not now addressing this chaffing young man. "I cannot play accompaniments, or anything. I do not know what Mr. Burley means."

"But, Miss Fayette," begs Miss Fortune, dropping her head on the side, "you can certainly do that little chansong you sang for me one day."

"Come, now," murmurs Alan, "Polly wants a 'chansong."

Doris smiles across at the flushed face. "I presume Miss Lenore will not be willing to give us anything more foreign than the 'Star Spangled Banner.'" "Which should you like best, Miss Gale, supposing I could do either?"

"What Miss Fortune referred to."

"Very well," assents the girl; "but you will none of you care for it."

Nevertheless, they do. Lenore, rising, and standing where she happens to be, folds her hands, and sings them a French song as old-fashioned as herself. It has an odd refrain with rhythm so quaint and strange that Alan and Miss Saltonstall exchange glances of enjoyment each time it recurs; and Lenore's manner is not the least pretty part of the performance. Her unconscious naturalness, and the fervor with which she brings out the smooth, French words are worth witnessing. In the midst of the song something very unfortunate happens to Dr. Lemist. He comes into the room.

All but Doris give him a nod of welcome, then he looks straight at Lenore, whose eyes meet his.

"Je t' aime, je t' aime," she sings.

Dr. Lemist's knowledge of the French language is fragmentary, but he knows the translation of that magic sentence, and stands transfixed, staring gravely before him. It is at this moment that the good doctor sees the truth as plainly as he sees Lenore now; the moment when, startled and incredulous, he turns a little pale and puts out a hand gropingly toward a friendly chair-back to steady himself.

"Bravo!" applauds Alan as the girl sits down amid a chorus of approval. "You have given us a

genuine pleasure," he adds, before rising to shake hands with the doctor whom Rachel presents to her friend, after which ceremony the new-comer seats himself beside Lenore. "I wish I had come in sooner," he says, quietly.

"I can sing it for you at any time," she remarks, with a bright smile. "I think it is strange you all care for it. I know many of them. My aunt taught me when I was very little, in Canada."

"Now, Alan," asks Miss Saltonstall, almost humbly, "do you feel like just one song?"

"Uncommonly; but Miss Lenore does not like a tenor voice," he replies, gravely.

"Why, do sing, Mr. Burley," begs Lenore, in an annoyed tone; "the others will like to hear you."

Alan bursts again into a hearty laugh. The appreciation that Alderley has so far bestowed upon the famous voice that has won all hearts in the metropolis has been consistent, if meagre.

"Why has Rachel no sense of humor?" he thinks, impatiently, for that lady is covering Lenore with a slow, majestic look, while searching for adequate speech in which to express her amazement. He rises and draws his cousin's hand within his arm.

"Come, Rachel; I will convert her, if you will help me. Here, we will try this."

It is the Salve di mora from Faust that he has chosen, and as the first note sounds, all else in the room is absolutely still. Mrs. Saltonstall works composedly at her knitting. She has heard Alan nearly all his life, and it would take something more than

his magnetic voice to move her from her composure; but otherwise the company is spell-bound. Lenore, who has been half inclined to cry with vexation, pauses, with the tears in her eyes, and immediately forgets everything but the voice. Only once has she heard anything resembling it, and that was on a great occasion when she went to an opera with her father, in Montreal. What a dreadful blunder she has made—talking to this artist as though he were an ordinary, mediocre singer.

Once she catches his eye as he stands there, facing them all, but he has forgotten that she is the skeptic for whom he is singing. The graceful pose of Doris's head and her downcast face, slightly flushed now, are all he sees; and when the song is done, he moves straight to her side and seats himself, unheeding every one else.

She looks up at him, her grey eyes dark with delight.

"What it must be to give so much pleasure!" she says, softly.

He does not speak. He keeps his eyes fixed on the sprays of heliotrope that lie at her throat.

"It must be difficult to be under the same roof with you, and be considerate in one's demands," she continues.

Still Mr. Burley cannot seem to decide what to say to her. He looks with fascinated eyes into the fair countenance so animated with pleasurable feeling.

"I do not remember her so," he is thinking. "She is mercenary, she is unscrupulous. I must not be

deceived by her pure, quiet face. I wish I could tell her, at this moment, and have it over."

His companion feels a kind sympathy for his dumbness. Strange that he should be so shy. Handsome, and gifted, she should have supposed him rather to be a flattered egotist.

"And you feared you had lost your voice, Miss Saltonstall was telling me," pursues Doris, making conversation, but still really interested. "You have been very ill."

"Has she told you that already?" and the minute he speaks, Miss Gale knows he has not been withheld by shyness. Moreover she does not like the expression of his smile. He is wondering what would happen if he should tell her here and now where he was at the time of his illness. Miss Gale feels a little vague fear of the suddenly bold young man studying her so narrowly.

"I have been ill," he continues, "so very ill that my friends, and especially my physician himself, could hardly credit their senses when I began to recover. In fact, I think the doctor was much disappointed."

"Disappointed," repeats Doris.

Alan sees the disapproval in the transparent face. "Doctors do not like to be proved in the wrong better than other people," he adds slowly, "and mine had pronounced my case hopeless."

Miss Gale rises at the last word, repeating it in a breathless undertone. Her companion's face reddens as hers grows paler, and he also rises. "Do not let me drive you away by a lot of egotistical rubbish," he says, speaking low, but with excitement.

She turns to him her lovely eyes with a sad, haunted expression that goes to his very heart. It is a moment of intensest revulsion of feeling to him.

Rachel sees her friend's look, and it drives her deeper into the maze of speculation which she is so loth to enter.

"You must excuse me," Doris says, quietly. "I wish to see Miss Fayette again before she goes," and she crosses to Lenore, soon afterward leaving the room with her. The doctor follows them immediately. Miss Fortune also departs, and Miss Saltonstall leaning back in a be-ribboned wicker chair looks up at her cousin with the kind smile women are apt to bestow upon him.

"What do you think of Miss Gale by this time, Alan?" she asks.

"I don't know," he returns, with an abstracted air-After a moment he adds impetuously, "She reminds me of a dim wood full of violets."

Rachel raises her fine eyebrows and looks in grave surprise at the tall figure above her.

"By the way, I must write a letter to go out in tonight's mail," he adds, after a pause, looking at his watch. "Will you excuse me?"

For a long minute after his steps have ceased to sound on the uncarpeted stairway, Rachel Saltonstall sits with her eyes fixed on the lowest pleatings of her black lawn dress. Then she rises, and moving across

the room, leans her elbows on the wooden mantel and looks into the mirror above it. Raising her hand she smoothes the soft grey hair that is as even in color as though delicately powdered.

"Mother, why did you marry a man whose hair was white at twenty-five?" she asks.

"Because—why, Rachel, if a person loves another, you do not suppose he or she would stop to inquire into a trifle of the loved one's personal appearance?"

"No," replies the daughter, slowly, "that is true,

no doubt."

"One—two—three—four," counts Mrs. Saltonstall, bending over her work. "I declare, I've forgotten how many stitches this row ought to have."

"Why could n't I have inherited your dark locks?"

speaks Miss Saltonstall again.

"I think your hair is very pretty, dear, I am sure it has been much admired, and then when you come to think, you are thirty years old," says the mother, complacently, oblivious of the sombre eyes looking out over the mantel.

# CHAPTER XIII.

### BITS OF BIOGRAPHY.

ISS SALTONSTALL'S curiosity, even anxiety about her young guest is not allayed by Doris' behavior during the evening. After the latter leaves the parlor with Lenore, she does not appear again, and just before tea time Mary comes, with a troubled face, to make Miss Gale's excuses for absenting herself from the meal. Rachel beckons her out into the hall in order that Mrs. Saltonstall may not overhear the conversation. She has the instinctive feeling that secrecy had better be observed with regard to her guert's ailments. The maid's honest, distressed face aids her in her decision.

"Do you say Miss Gale has a headache?" she asks, with the sweet earnestness that lends importance to her least remark.

"That's what she says, ma'am," replies Mary, her eyes filling with evident tears, although she forces a smile.

"I wish you would tell me if you think I can do anything for her."

"Oh, ma'am, I wish I knew!" exclaims the woman, throwing her apron over her face, unable to hold back any longer a flood of tears which come as quietly as suddenly.

"Come up to my room, Mary," says Miss Saltonstall decidedly.

"Indeed, ma'am—indeed—" protests the maid, sobbingly, but following the other's lead.

"Now," says Rachel, when they are safely shut in, "have your cry out where no one can see you, and then tell me if you think I had better go to Miss Gale."

"I would n't dare send you, ma'am, not while she's in the blues' as she calls it," and Mary wipes her eyes and brushes off a tear that has dropped on her neat, black dress. "All the same I know she would be happier if she had some one that she would talk to. It's a hard thing to be so young and to have nobody."

Miss Saltonstall gives the assent of silence. She is in doubt what to do. She can not question a servant, even one so devoted as she knows this faithful woman to be.

"It's three years this mouth that I've been with her," pursues Mary after the moment of silence, "and for the first two years I would n't ask to see a lighter-hearted, merrier young lady than mine; but about a year ago she began to fall thoughtful and sigh, and its been growing worse ever since. Last Fall Dr. Reid, her guardian, began to come and have long talks with her, and after these talks Miss Gale would sit for hours thinking and never say one word. It was early last December that she decided to go to Europe. She decided it all of a sudden, and every day for a week before we went, she'd be shut up with Dr. Reid, and when he left her, her eyes would be

bright and queer-looking, and as soon as the door had closed behind him, she would burst out crying. I was distressed, and ventured to speak to her; but she would always answer that it was tiresome work, settling up her affairs, but that she should be her own mistress in a few days - making out, you see, that it was only the bother of business that ailed her. Well, for a few weeks after we sailed, it did seem as though she was going to be her old self again. She was the life of the party, only there was a little something unnatural about her that made me feel dissatisfied, and when all of a sudden we heard one day that Dr. Reid had died of apoplexy, the poor, dear, young lady fainted dead away. Fortunately there was no one with her but me at the time, and I brought her to, all right, and no one else suspected how she took it to heart. We were in Paris then, and Mrs. Vance and her daughter had gone out shopping. It was at the time in the day when letters arrived, and nothing would have got Miss Gale to go anywhere but to the bank where hers were sent. I remember that day, when we got back she did not even wait to take off her hat, but sat right down and opened her letters, and this news was in the last one she read. Dr. Reid had fallen down dead of apoplexy, before ever we landed in Liverpool, and here, two weeks afterward the news came to her in an accidental way, through a friend's letter. I never shall forget how she behaved after I had her thoroughly revived. She was so nervous and wild like. She sent two cable messages, and then shut herself up in her room, and none of us

saw her again that day. Of course Mrs. Vance knew what a friend Miss Gale had lost in Dr. Reid, so it did n't seem strange to her. Well, ever since that, Miss Saltonstall, she's been subject to these wretched fits of unhappiness such as has hold of her now; and the misery that's in her face, nearly breaks my heart." Here Mary's lips twitch, but she does not break down again. "What makes it harder to bear, is that I'd been fool enough to think they would n't ever come back after she met you and your mother in New York. She seemed so happy in the prospect of coming here. She talked about it all the time, and kept rejoicing in the idea that Alderley was such a quiet place, and that she should be so out of the way here. 'Why, my best friend and my worst enemy would be puzzled to find me there, Mary,' she'd say, and so it went until this afternoon, when she came toiling up the stairs as if she'd grown suddenly old, and with the look in her face that wrings my heart with pain. What in the world can it be, Miss Saltonstall, that has power to change her so? I hope I've done right to talk to you this way, Miss Gale admires you so much it gave me courage to speak. I thought she might open her heart to somebody who was her equal and could win her love."

Rachel looks thoughtfully across at her companion. They are sitting opposite one another, but Mary rises as she finishes, and unconsciously, with her lady's-maid instinct, picks up a light shawl flung across the foot of the bed, and folds it neatly. She is a pleasant creature to look at even in her distress, with her red-

brown hair, and eyes the same color, and her round, wholesome, slightly freckled face.

"I think you have done right to talk to me, if there is no one who has a better right to try to help Miss Gale. Tell her from me that I am very sorry her head aches, and that I should like to come to her if she will let me."

"Let me tell her now, Miss Saltonstall?"

"Certainly, I will wait here for you."

In a very few moments the maid returns with her non-success written plainly in her countenance. Miss Saltonstall can also read that contact with her mistress has restored her caution.

"Miss Gale sends her love and thanks, but will be better to be alone this evening," she says insignificantly.

"Very well. You will know best what she would like to have for tea, Mary, so I will leave it for you to attend to."

After the woman has gone, Miss Saltonstall sits thinking deeply until a second summons to tea arouses her; then she rises and goes down stairs. What unlucky fate has given her cousin the power to summon poor Doris' black genii, and what could Mr. Burley have said to her that brought such terror into the lovely face this afternoon? Miss Saltonstall, like all proud and frank natures, abhors secrecy and mystery. It is hard to have both suddenly brought into her home, to have her anticipated summer ruined, her lover-cousin transformed into a preoccupied, brusque man, and all by a woman, vounger, richer, handsomer

than herself, her dead sister's dearest friend, about whom, until now, there has been a kind of halo, a sacredness too tender for approach.

But Rachel Saltonstall is a good woman, and a brave woman, and she goes down to the tea-table, and takes upon herself the task of hiding from her mother both the peculiarity of Doris' absence, and Alan Burley's spasmodically alternating volubility and silence.

Mr. Burley's thirty years of life have been very full of interest to himself, and also to the devoted cousin and aunt who have smoothed his path for him as far as he would permit. He is the son of Mrs. Saltonstall's elder brother, and, left an orphan in the third year of his college life, he abruptly took leave of his alma mater, giving as sufficient reason the extreme slenderness of the income left to him by an improvident father. Where there is a will most young students can find a way to complete the course of their education; but Alan Burley's mind had, for some time, been turning far away from collegiate pursuits. His remarkable voice, while it of course made him the bright, particular star of vocal performances among his classmates, also found enthusiastic recognition in essentially musical circles, and much illadvised flattery fell to the share of the good-looking young student, whose head could not fail to have been turned had he not once a week received a healthful antidote in the shape of a lesson from his voice teacher, from whose untender mercies he invariably returned with the erstwhile airy balloon of his hopeful self-esteem hanging flabbily somewhere within him, punctured through and through by the swordthrusts of the oracle's terrible speech. And this man was his best friend, better, even, than Aunt Catherine, who had insisted upon paying for these expensive lessons after hearing her nephew sing during his last vacation; for it was his brusque, sarcastic advice that kept the boy at his books, and clipped the wings that were impatient to soar. Aunt Catherine would have said, in fact did say, "Your education is well enough now, Alan. What you ought to do is to devote yourself to your voice, and not waste any more time, I think." The elegant but abandoned Mr. Burley senior, when appealed to, wrote: "Please yourself, my dear boy. Go to Italy, by all means, if Aunt Cathie wishes to send you. You know I have n't a copper to invest in such a scheme, but I promise to attend your American début in full dress and a proscenium box. With your nose and physique and a tenor voice nothing should be impossible to you. Go in and win, with your father's blessing."

But even the blessing of a better father than Alan's would not have availed against the curses of the master of voice culture when the young student modestly proposed his plan to him. It was a tradition in the building that the great man occasionally hurled missiles as well as profanity at his luckless pupils during his fits of temporary irritation, and on this occasion Alan observing him cast a red glance at a huge book on the corner of the piano congratulated himself that athletics had been his favorite of the various collegiate departments. But the teacher contented himself by

remanding the whole proposition to a locality very much warmer than even the souther-most point of Italy.

"I suppose you fancy—you and your wise set of friends, that because you can sing in tune and have a fair natural voice, you ought to go off at a tangent and give up all else at once lest you should be cheating the country out of an ornament! I've met such people before. 'The woods are full of 'em.'"

Alan colored violently and diminished consciously in size. Nevertheless he smiled. These thundering tones had been softened into actual compliment for him to-day. That is what gave him courage to suggest his plan.

"But I tell you this country of yours is a wonderfully patient one, and it can wait for you to get some ideas into your head to back up your musical ones with. No impresario will hang himself if you defer committing the score of Faust a few years yet. No. A voice isn't enough, my boy," continued his adviser, more mildly, "a singer must have brains behind it. You work away at your studies. You're doing well enough. I'll notify you when the country's too hot to hold you any longer," and with a maddeningly patronizing pat on the shoulder Alan was dismissed and went flying down the two flights of stairs three steps at a time in a ferment of disappointment, anger, and humiliation, but conscious all the time that he should obey the mentor who wielded over him an extraordinary magnetic influence. And so he remained faithfully at his studies, working better than before, for six

months longer. At the end of that time his father died and this event ended his college life summarily. The settling up of the estate was not a particularly tedious matter, and consisted mainly in giving up nearly everything to satisfy the creditors of the deceased. There was fortunately enough to satisfy them, but so little was left for Alan that no question remained as to the advisability of his pursuing any study but the one which was to fit him for earning his living. Mrs. Saltonstall came nobly to the front. She adored her handsome, talented nephew, and would have provided for him as for her own son; but the nephew did not choose to accept more from her than a necessary loan. With this, and the approval of the Great Mogul, his teacher, he set forth for a four years' term of study abroad. He lived closely and worked con amore. Once a year his aunt and Rachel visited him and took him away with them for a little change. They found him flattered and successful, and added their own loving praise and rejoicing; but for all the enthusiasm which the young singer succeeded in arousing, he was not destined to fulfill the fondest dreams of his admirers by shining on the operatic stage. His throat disappointed him and grew unreliable in heavy, sustained work, and so giving up that project he returned to his own country with a prestige gained by successful appearances before London audiences, and was riding upon the topmost wave of popular favor as a concert singer when illness seized him during a brief engagement—the illness from which he has just recovered.

His aunt looks affectionately at him this evening across the tea table and nods with satisfaction. "You look as well as ever you did in your life, Alan," she says. "No one expects you to have color. The Burleys never do. Even I as a young girl never had any, and yet I never was ailing. We all have strong constitutions, and I shall always say that it was nothing but malaria that laid hold of you last winter."

"I am afraid you will," responds her nephew ambiguously.

"Don't you think so yourself, Alan?"

"I have not the smallest idea, Aunt Catherine. The fact of my recovery filled my physician with such consternation that he fell dead of apoplexy before I was able to get off my bed, and thereby deprived me of much valuable information regarding my down-fall."

Rachel's eyelids quiver as though she would look up, but she does not. Dr. Reid died of apoplexy. Was he her cousin's physician? Fie, what is it to her if he was? She is not searching for a clew.

# CHAPTER XIV.

### LENORE RECEIVES.

RACHEL needs but one glance at her guest the following morning to discern that she is still "in the blues." But Doris' smile is sufficient to satisfy Mrs. Saltonstall, who rallies the girl good-naturedly, as she comes in, a little late, to breakfast.

"Why beat about the bush, Doris? Why not say at once that you are already convinced that I was perfectly right and that Alderley gives you the doleful dumps?"

"Because I am a descendant of George Washington," is the gay reply, as the girl seats herself beside Mr. Burley. "I am already convinced to the contrary, and I mean to make assurance doubly sure by beginning my explorations this very morning. Lenore Fayette, she insists upon my dropping the Miss, is anxious that I should see where she lives."

- "A lovely place," remarks Mrs. Saltonstall.
- "Gone to seed," remarks her nephew.
- "You must drive," says Mrs. Saltonstall.
- "Certainly, with my ponies," adds Rachel. "They can be ready any moment you like."

"That would be very pleasant," replies Doris, "but I shall be so glad if you would go on as if I were not here, and not put yourselves out for me." There is an almost piteous look in her face, and Miss Saltonstall sees it.

"That is precisely what we should do if you were not here—drive," remarks Alan, with his eyes cast down to his plate. "You will find that to be the great resource here, and in Rome you must do as the Romans do."

"Do the Romans never walk? Is it so far everywhere?"

"It is not so very far to Elmdale," replies Mrs. Saltonstall," but the roads are dusty. Sprinkling carts are unknown here. For my own part I can breathe best right on our own grounds," and the hostess heaves a martyred sigh.

"But, mother," laughs Rachel, "you know you complain that it rains in Alderley every other day. Wouldn't watering carts be superfluous? No. Doris is to do exactly as she pleases. I know the fascination of finding one's way alone about a quiet old village like this."

Doris throws her a quick, grateful glance; more grateful than Rachel feels that she deserves. Is it not to her own interest to abet her guest in straying off alone, thereby leaving herself and Alan to spend their morning together as usual?

But Doris does not trouble herself about motives. She sees a decent means provided for her to escape from view for at least half a day, and avails herself of it eagerly.

Miss Gale is passing through the valley of humiliation this morning. She finds herself forced periodically to appear, certainly to herself, perhaps to others, in a melodramatic mysterious light which does not

furnish her the luxurious misery experienced by most heroines. After a night like the last she is conscious only of **n** hot shame at her condition. She knows herself merely to be a commonplace enough girl, with a strong dash of cowardice (if that is not a paradox) in her composition; a cowardice that drove her to the step which she is now regretting, and that is still the means of keeping her in the position of a Damocles who can, but dares not, discover how strong is the hair by which the sword is suspended.

As they all rise from the table, Mr. Burley draws Doris' chair away.

"Some morning when the exploring fever is not on you, Miss Gale, I hope you will like to play tennis."

"I never have played it. Do people quarrel at that as much as at croquet?"

"O, no," remarks Rachel." They have n't breath to spare. You must certainly learn, and then we can beat Mr. Burley."

Doris has beaten Mr. Burley already, and at a more important game than lawn-tennis, although she is protoundly unconscious of it. He has lain awake the whole night revolving in his mind the utter strangeness, the bitter-sweetness of his position; and the outcome of the incessantly repeating circle of his thought, is, that a new intention, a bewildering hope has wakened within him, one which means utter renunciation of the line of action which until two days ago he contemplated following as soon as fortune should bring him face to face with Doris Gale. Of a sanguine nature, there is but one if which stands in

the way of his hope. Could that be answered to his satisfaction, how glorious the world would look to him this morning as he stands, composedly viewing Doris in the moment before she leaves the room.

"We dine at two, dear," observes Mrs. Saltonstall, thoughtfully. "You are not going to take that lovely blue gown out. Never mind what Rachel says, you will find it very dusty."

Half an hour afterward Miss Gale finds herself descending the stone steps that lead into the street, with nobody's eye upon her, not even Mary's comment to dread. How good the country air smells as she saunters along the walk separated from the roadway only by a green ribbon of turf. How good it is to see no human being in any direction save one market woman, driving her wagon briskly, an alert terrier beside her on the seat, and her tin cans rattling. It strikes Doris that if this isolation is to continue, it might be well to get a word of direction while she may. So she waves her parasol, and Hepsy with a short "Whoa," obeys the summons.

"Can you tell me if Elmdale is on this road."

Miss Nash's eyes fill with interest. "Yes, ma'am, 'tis. And when you get to it it's a narrer, long house with six pillers in front and lots o' yard around it. Was you goin' there for board?"

" No."

"Glad o' that. Wanted to save you trouble if you was. She won't take anybody—"here Hepsy stops and looks amazedly at Ino, who, instead of emitting stifled barks as usual, is wagging his tail.

Doris is moving on, when she hears a feeble call. "Marm — Miss —"

She turns around.

Hepsy points at the terrier. "You noticed him, 1 s'pose?"

"Yes," replies Doris, amused by her manner, "he is a bright little fellow," she adds, seeing that the woman is expecting some comment.

"But he aint yourn?"

"O, no. He is not mine."

Hepsy's face beams. "I thought he might be. He seemed to take a fancy to you. He's lost. I mean he's found—a—good mornin' marm. I'm much obliged to you," and she drives off, leaving Doris bewildered and laughing.

The little colloquy has done her good, and she moves away lightly on her quest. There would be no trouble in any case about recognizing Elmdale when she reaches it, and as she opens the gate, she sees Lenore a fews rods away, coming to meet her.

"Bless your lovely face!" cries the latter, springing forward, her eyes illuminated, as she recognizes her visitor. "I did so hope you would come this morning, but I did not expect they would spare you so soon. And you had no difficulty in recognizing the house?" with a humorous little chuckle. "Is it not just as I said — half school and half church to look at? And that is what it really is." Lenore has linked her arm in Miss Gale's and is leading her through the long grass. "In it I learn — I learn how to be economical. Aunt Deborah is a capital teacher. She

does not allow me to have any money to spend and so I learn quickly. And as for prayers, I do not think so many were said in the convent, although I do not say many. All my prayers seem condensed now into one very short one. I say it the first thing in the morning and the last at night." Lenore has suddenly dropped her flippant tone and looks seriously into the taller girl's face. "It is, 'Good Lord, deliver us!"

"Then you are not so happy as you expected to be?"

"Not exactly."

"I feared a disappointment when I saw your aunt on the steamer."

"Oh, yes," with a short laugh. "What an inspired little idiot I was then. I dare say you remember more than I do of what I was looking forward to. I have been thoroughly cured since." While they have been talking Lenore has unconsciously led her friend to the geranium bed. She stoops and breaks a beautifully crowned stem and draws it through one of Miss Gale's button-holes."

"How lovely, Lenore! Thank you. I believe I never saw finer geraniums than yours."

"Yes, they are doing very well. Dear little things I owe them many a happy hour. No, Miss Gale, you had better not try that garden seat. There is hardly any strength left in the old thing."

"It is a pity," observes Doris, looking about her at the brook and the mound of woodbine, and the neighboring trees. "What a lovely spot to be lazy in."

"Yes, I have often imagined lying here in a hammock; —but come; on the piazza is room for fifty

girls. How delightful that I should at last have you to sit there with."

"Do you know, Lenore, it is a fascinating old place," says Doris, when they are established on the upper

step.

"Yes," returns the other with a light sigh. "I thought so when I came. All that I pictured might easily have been true here, might it not? But poverty, Miss Gale, is a dreadful thing."

"There are worse things," the other replies, turning

away her face.

"Perhaps," with a shrug, "but I have not tried them. I hope I may never try them."

"I hope you never may," rises to Doris' lips, but she does not ultimate the thought. "Look at me, Lenore," she says, instead, having gained control of her features, "where are the red cheeks that you had on the boat? I thought yesterday that you were thinner, and now I am sure of it." She takes her companion's hand and examines its brown, slight fingers and the little wrist. "What is the matter with you?"

"To tell the honest truth, I think it is having nothing to do," Lenore replies wearily. "I see no one sometimes from morning until night but my aunt, three times at table. The rest of the time she wishes to know where I am, but beyond that there are only two rules that I must observe; one is to be quiet, and the other to keep out of the way."

"Does she never talk to you?"

Lenore turns out the palms of her hands and raises shoulders and eyebrows. "She had no one to talk to

for months before I came. Naturally she had lost the habit. Besides that, she is so spiritual minded! She has no need for what she calls light converse."

"Can you not love her at all?" asks Doris doubt-

fully, compassionately.

"That is a secret of mine," returns Lenore, with a mischievous glance out of the corner of her eye. "No one in this town could tell you whether or no I love Aunt Deborah — or stay. I will tell you. There were three days lately when I loved her devotedly. She has bought me the most beautiful dress. The day she bought it I loved her; the day I took it to the modiste I loved her, and the day it came home I loved her. You must see it," here she springs excitedly to her feet. "Come up stairs with me."

"Had I better meet Miss Belden?" asks Doris reluctantly.

"You will not meet her, unless you go into the kitchen. No indeed. No danger. Follow me," and Lenore leads the way up stairs to her own room.

When they arrive there Miss Gale looks about her curiously, at the high bedstead, and bureau with its swaying square of mirror well up out of Lenore's way, the flaunting wall-paper, and low ceiling.

"Sit right down by the window, close to my pet elm," says Lenore cheerily, hurrying into a closet and bringing out between two careful hands something wrapped in a sheet which she deposits gingerly on the floor, the bed being too tall for her operations.

"Now," taking out a pin and putting it into her snouth, "clothes are n't any novelty" — another pin

— "to you"—another pin — "but you must remember they are"—pin—"to me"—pin—"and I have not shown"—pin—"this to Miss Fortune at all. She does not very often come. She is very much scared of Aunt Deborah's spiritual mind." Lenore is mumbling almost unintelligibly now, and carefully unfolding the precious gown.

"Take those pins out of your mouth or I will not look at it," says Doris decisively, standing beside her. Lenore obeys, and, rising, holds up her treasure at full length. It is a wine-colored silk of good texture.

"There!" she exclaims, looking from the dress to Doris with sparkling eyes.

Miss Gale handles the silk with an approving nod. "It is a beauty," she says, "and so are you in it, I know."

"O I do look so nice," avers Lenore, earnestly. "Now should I not love Aunt Deborah for that! Ah," dropping the burden into Doris' hands, "I must see that the door is locked. She is capable of packing the dress away if she found me parading it. Now," returning to the center of attraction and posing her head on the side, "what should you say it cost, Miss Gale?"

"One hundred and fifty dollars, perhaps."

"Ah!" Lenore gives a stifled scream and falls away dramatically. "It cannot be."

"Why I think it must have cost that. Miss Belden cannot be so poor as you think, or at any rate she has a softer spot in her heart for her niece than you have given her credit for."

Lenore remains gazing and musing. "Do you think so? No, it cannot be that. I really — I suppose I ought not to say it, but I really hope that is not the explanation — unreciprocated affection."

Doris laughs at the other's comical grimace. "Why need it be unreciprocated?"

"Because I could no more love her than I could love a piece of sole-leather! Now the great secret is out. Never tell anybody. I could not love her even if I were to be obliged to give my dress back as a punishment. But is it not," eyeing the silk with a fond, sidelong glance, "is it not a charming color?—and think! the enormity of the thing! not a place to wear it; not a single place!"

"Then you do not go out much?" asks Doris innocently.

Lenore laughs merrily at the thought. "No, I certainly do not grow thin from dissipation." The two girls sit down side by side, the rustling dress across their laps. Lenore's face grows serious. "You must have taught me how to laugh again. I thought I had forgotten. Ah, you never can know what it has been like—my life here. To come directly from a school full of girls of my own age and to find myself in a place where no one knows me, no one carefor me!"

"Then your aunt must be a very unpopular woman.

"O no! No indeed. She is the reverse of that, and her friends have all visited me, but they are old you know, and they glare and stare at me as though I ought not to be alive."

"Well, you can not be blamed for not finding that exhilarating," replies Doris. It does not require fine insight for her to perceive that there is something beneath the surface, some reason for Lenore's isolation, unsuspected by the girl herself.

"But all that goes for nothing, Miss Gale, while you are here," she says, with her old impulsiveness. "Shall you be at the Saltonstalls long? Do not say no!"

"I cannot say at all, Lenore. You know I am a wanderer on the face of the earth. I have no ties to keep me anywhere."

"Then why not stay?" asks the other eagerly—
"although" as if struck by a sudden thought, "if Miss
Fortune's suspicions are correct, it might make a
difference."

"What do you mean?"

"Why Miss Fortune — poor Miss Fortune," with a little laugh, "she is always imagining things, and she may easily be mistaken, but she feels sure that Miss Saltonstall and her cousin are engaged, and if they were, why you, perhaps —"

"Would feel de trop? Is that what you mean? I am not afraid of that—that is I shall know it when I am, and then I shall flee. I should have supposed," thoughtfully, "that Miss Rachel was older than her cousin, but I dare say it is only her lovely hair that gives one that impression. If your friend's supposition is true Mr. Burley is a fortunate man."

"Yes; but so is Miss Saltonstall a fortunate woman," responds Lenore, loyally. "You do not

know Mr. Burley yet, and then just think of being married to that voice."

"I don't like to think of it."

" Why?"

"Only because it is so very beautiful. Why, people rave over voices like Mr. Burley's, don't you know that Lenore? A singer such as he is, lives in an atmosphere of excitement and flattery; especially a singer who is so handsome. Not an atmosphere for a wife to be happy in. However, Miss—"

Here Miss Gale's judicial remarks are interrupted by a knock at the door. The sound, slight as it is causes Lenore to spring up electrified and dragging her festal garment across the room, to cast it and its enveloping sheet, into the closet, after which she unfastens and opens the door and discovers Miss Belden.

"I thought I heard laughter," announces Miss Deborah.

"You did hear it, Aunt Deborah. Walk in and let me introduce you to my friend Miss Gale, whose acquaintance I made on the steamer, and whom you may remember seeing when you came to meet me."

Miss Belden is exceedingly surprised, but no one could guess it.

"My memory is excellent," she says, coming over the threshold and making a stiff, old-fashioned courtesy. "I recognize Miss Gale." Doris wonders how this can be possible for the old lady certainly does not lift her eyelids. "Can you not take your friend down into the parlor, Lenore, and make her more comfortable. You must make allowances for my niece, Miss Gale. She is singularly lacking in certain branches of decorum, but I always try to believe that she will improve."

How Miss Gale pities Lenore in that moment that she hears Miss Belden speak in the smooth, low voice. She shrinks repugnantly from the flabby, sanctimonious face with its hooked nose and mean little eyes which the spinster is so chary of showing.

"I have nothing to excuse, Miss Belden," she hastens to reply. "Lenore was good enough to show me her room, that is all."

Miss Deborah gives a flickering smile which no one can regret vanishes so soon. "I see she prefers to do that under lock and key," she replies. "Through some unfortunate misunderstanding my niece Lenore did not expect to come to a home of poverty and she is not naturally adaptable; but we try to believe that she will improve."

Doris feels her face redden with embarrassment and disgust. Lenore is standing passively, with hands folded, in the middle of the room, and Miss Gale does not know whether to be most disconcerted or most thankful when her friend catches her eye and bestows upon her a solemn, but unmistakably mirthful wink.

"Well, young ladies, I will return to my duties," Miss Belden continues, reminding the guest of a stealthy craw-fish as she backs toward the door. "Miss Gale, I trust you will enjoy Alderley. Are you making a stay of any length?"

"I am visiting Miss Saltonstall. I cannot tell for how long."

"Ah, good morning," and Miss Belden retires, not displeased, perhaps even a little triumphant in an obscure, distorted way, that her niece should have that sort of visitor. She has never felt the remotest desire that Lenore should be made happy by the worldly means of youthful society. She understands the avoidance of her by the young people of Alderley. She could alter all that with perfect ease, but her crabbed pride will not speak the necessary word. While she abets Lenore's loneliness, and with one side of her nature feels an evil satisfaction in it, in another view her self-love is injured, and she hates those who presume to put such a slight on one of her blood. It is her vanity - and there is a prodigious fund of it hidden down deep under that veil of chastened flesh - that pulses with gratification as she descends the dark, back stairs of her dwelling. The Saltonstalls have so long ceased to be more than flitting guests in Alderley, that all regularity of intercourse with the inhabitants has ceased. But they are the great folk of the village, although no one of the "best families" admits it in words. Their wealth, their comings and goings, are ever-interesting topics. To have them and their guests single out Lenore for attentions appeals directly to what Miss Belden would term her love of justice. She knows that however much the neighborhood may wonder and condemn, nothing could so triumphantly place Lenore high up in public opinion. Miss Belden has no fear that the girl will pass beyond her own control. She has recently riveted the last link in the chain that binds her niece to Elmdale and her own commands. She smiles as the thought of it

comes over her in her quiet kitchen. Lenore may drive with Miss Saltonstall, may visit with Miss Gale, — these cost nothing, and serve to sear the souls of Miss Belden's dearest friends. She will know when to put the brakes "hard down."

Meanwhile Lenore is out at the gate with her departing guest.

"You will come again, and we will take walks together?" she asks, eagerly.

"Certainly, Lenore; and you might be worse off than you are — remember that."

"I dare say there is always a worse," admits the other, with a shrug. "Ah, I have one friend I ought not to have forgotten in naming them to you. She is a farmer woman who lives up the mountain. She used to be a servant here in the days when there were servants. She was devoted to my mother and is devoted to me, but Aunt Deborah does not approve of her, and she dares not come here." Lenore laughs at some recollection. "She is always meeting me in the street and making me drink milk. Imagine how comical I look standing up by a wagon and drinking."

"Rather a good plan, I think," observes Doris.
"You look as though a milk diet would not hurt you."

"I come to the Fortunes to-morrow. I shall probably see you?"

"Yes, indeed. I hope so. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

And Doris goes back up the street. It is very warm now, and she is dissatisfied with Lenore's lot and with herself; and rather disappointed to find that she has not dropped her burden at Elmdale.

# CHAPTER XV.

### ADVICE AND ADMONITION.

A FTER dinner, for which meal Miss Gale reaches home in ample time, the family separates, each to indulge in his or her own particular form of laziness.

Mr. Burley favors a hammock swung in a corner of the piazza where he smokes and reads. Mrs. Saltonstall retires to her room for the half-hour's siesta which has become a daily necessity of her life. Rachel, who never sleeps in the day-time, takes her writing desk out to an arm chair under the shadiest tree, and Doris, rather dreading her own society, follows her.

"I am not going to speak one word, Miss Rachel," she says, apologetically. "It looks so green and pleasant out here, I don't think I want to shut myself up in a room."

"By no means, Doris, and you may speak as often as you please. I am not going to write for critical eyes. But would you not like to read something? You know where to find books."

"I believe I will," replies the other, turning back toward the house in order that Miss Saltonstall may settle to her writing undisturbed. In passing up the steps Doris catches the eye of the reader in the hammock. "Is it interesting?" she asks, lightly. He springs out upon his feet and tosses his cigar away.

"Very. Will you sit down," eagerly drawing a chair forward, "and let me show you this article on New England scenery?"

"No, indeed. How could you let me disturb you so. Go immediately and pick up that cigar. You had but just begun it. I can not countenance such extravagance. I am going into the house for a book and then I am going back to sit with Miss Rachel. I have promised to be quite still."

"You need not be still a moment if you stay with me."

"I am afraid you imply that that is a strong inducement to offer," she answers, smiling, "but it is not nearly strong enough. When I come back let me see you as comfortable as you were before."

He watches her with delighted eyes as she crosses the piazza and disappears within. It has been Mr. Burley's fate up to the present time to be courted rather than to court. From the day he entered college up to now he has never offered an attention to a woman which has not been met at least half way. Perhaps that is because he has not exerted himself to offer many. At all events, Miss Gale is a new type to him. In the dozen trifling matters in which they have come in contact during the last few days she has been so unconscious, so really indifferent to his presence or absence, that aside from the strangeness of his situation toward her, she would possess a provoking attraction for him by right of her beauty and

style. For, let the novels say what they will, a plain woman can not attract by being indifferent. Her charm must lie—as a pretty woman's may—in a cordiality of manner, a bright, responsive intelligence, an apparent concentration of interest in the man to whom she happens to be talking at the moment; and that is the sort of interest to which Alan Burley, the handsome young student with the flashing eyes and silvery voice,—the young American working like a Trojan for his laurels in a strange land,—the fashionable star without whom no musical festival is now complete,—has ever been accustomed. It fills him with a strange satisfaction that it should be missing from Doris. He wishes to woo her, the young girl whom he had expected to meet as a disagreeable duty and to part from gladly.

"She is a woman, and therefore to be won." He quotes this in the reverie into which he falls there by the piazza rail, the pages of New England scenery flapping in the breeze where the magazine lies neglected on the floor. Yes, but suppose some one to have won her before him. That is a sensible hypothesis upon which to explain her preoccupation; but it brings a gleam into Mr. Burley's eyes more suited to a knight of old in clanking armor than to a young man of the nineteenth century in a prosaic but highly becoming smoking jacket.

"I admire your obedience," speaks a voice behind him, and turning, before he can speak to detain her, he sees Miss Gale go swiftly down the steps and across the grass. Her dress is black and thin and very long, and her exquisite figure in it looks more slender and shapely than ever, while her arms show whitely through the black lace that clings close to every curve.

The gleam is still in Alan's eyes as he watches her.
"What an old egotist Miss Lockett must have
been," he thinks. "I'll wager she never came within
a thousand miles of resembling that glorious creature."

Doris settles herself in a high-backed rustic chair, and Miss Saltonstall, raising her eyes, smiles for very pleasure in the picture.

"What did you find to read?"

"A volume of poems. I am ashamed because I do not appreciate poetry, and I am determined to reform."

"Ah? Educating yourself in warm weather. I congratulate you on your strength of mind," and Rachel applies herself again to her writing.

Miss Gale leans her head back and drops her hands idly on the closed volume. It is impossible to be in a hurry about anything to-day, even the pursuit of culture. Everything is so green and warm and quiet, not sultry, a little breeze occasionally rustles the branches and tosses her hair with its fresh breath, butterflies disport themselves over the shaven turf, and bees make systematic visits to the honeysuckle at the corner of the piazza. Mr. Burley has returned to the hammock. Doris can see it through the vines swinging like a gigantic cocoon. She wonders whether he has energy sufficient to be reading. No smoke curls out from his corner, and occasionally a snatch of song comes forth fitfully, as he pushes the railing with his foot to give his cradle new impetus.

Miss Saltonstall's pen moves steadily. Doris, nearly closing her eyes, examines her. What a refined face, what a strong face she has. How impossible it would be for her in her serene and lofty womanhood to do an ignoble act. Doris is constantly finding herself studying people with no other motive than to decide whether they, in her situation, would do as she has done. In this case her decision is reached very quickly. Miss Saltonstall would endure any trial rather than to take so mad a step. She feels a sharp contraction of the heart, a desperate pang of envy looking on the peaceful, pale face opposite, and two sudden tears trickle through her lashes. Rachel, glancing up to brush away an annoying fly, sees the tears and resumes her writing.

"Poor child," she thinks, "What are prettiness and youth and hair without a streak of grey, and discontent therewith! I suppose it is my duty to try to help her. How can I approach her?" She finished her letter, bringing it to an abrupt termination, folds the sheet, slips it into an envelope and addresses it, then closes her desk. The book of poems still lies closed in Miss Gale's lap and she is gazing straight before her, so forgetful of her surroundings that she starts when Miss Saltonstall speaks.

"I'm afraid you have not made much progress, Doris. This is a very demoralizing spot to try to work in. A penny for your thoughts, my dear. Why, you blush so I think they must be worth more than that. What will you take for your confidence?"

Doris turns painfully red, and hesitating under the

other's kind, playful look. "Indeed — they are worth nothing, Miss Rachel. Not interesting, not edifying, not anything good or satisfactory."

"Then why think them?"

"I would give everything I have to be able not to," the girl replies, impulsively.

"Let me help you not to."

"O, no," with a frightened glance at the serious face.

Their chairs are close together and Miss Saltonstall leans forward with her arms upon her desk. "You have been thinking them too much since yesterday afternoon when Mr. Burley said something to pain you."

Doris shrinks away, but keeps her eyes fixed on the dark ones that hold her. "Did he tell you?— did he notice?—" she begins, incoherently.

"He has told me nothing; but I have seen."

"What have you seen?" The girl begins to feel a terror of the grave eyes that seem to read her through and through.

"That you have a heavy trial and no one with whom to share it. You have lost even your guardian."

"Dear Dr. Reid!" Doris suddenly clasps both hands over her eyes. "If he had lived all would have turned out right. No matter how selfish, how misguided I had been, Dr. Reid would have protected me from the consequences."

"I am persuaded, my dear child, that you are magpifying your trouble. Only tell me —"

"Do not ask it!" exclaims the other, violently agi-

tated. "Miss Rachel, nothing would induce me. I—what I have to bear, I must bear alone."

"But you can not bear it alone," comes the calm, low voice, "unless you go off by yourself somewhere and live where no one can see you."

Doris half rises from her chair, but Miss Saltonstall presses her back. "I do not mean to vex you, I would give much to help. You are dear to us for Miriam's sake, and I want to help you to the truth. You waste valuable time when you mourn whatever is an accomplished fact. You have a responsibility in the world if only to use your money wisely."

"I have no right even to that, Miss Saltonstall." The speaker drops her hands and returns her friend's look, hopelessly.

"No right to what?"

"Miss Lockett's money."

"Is there some one living whom you think she would prefer to have it?"

" No."

Miss Saltonstall draws a patient sigh. "Would it make you happier to be rid of it?"

Doris nervously clasps her hands. "Sometimes I think it would. Sometimes I would like to give it all to the charities for which Miss Lockett designed it before she thought of me."

"In other words, if you were a Roman Catholic you would go into a nunnery. Tell me this. Do you know of any person upon whom it inflicts a hardship tor you to keep this fortune?"

<sup>66</sup> No."

"Is it in your power to make restitution to the person you think you have—the person you have wronged?"

"The person is myself," hopelessly.

"Ah! Then, Doris, that makes it easy." Doris leans forward slightly and a ray of interest comes into her face. "It is of no consequence what happens to ourselves, you know, so long as we do not make others suffer."

"Is it nothing," she asks passionately, "to feel that I may never come out from under a cloud of shame and remorse?"

"Can you do some good by remaining under that cloud? Can you in that way undo a little of the harm that your — mistake accomplished?"

"N-No; but I can punish myself."

"O, no, dear. That is an illusion. You cannot punish yourself by yielding to unhappiness, but you can punish others severely and pile mistake upon mistake. You can cheat them of the influence of your brightness and gaiety. You can add your mite to the cloud of gloom and depression in the world. You can let your money lie idle from lack of energy to use it to benefit others."

"Wait, Miss Rachel, wait," says Doris, breathlessly,
Say that again — what you said a minute ago about
its being no matter what happens to ourselves."

"Yes; we must not lay too great stress upon things pertaining to ourselves. There is no time in this busy world for vain regrets. If we have done wrong, even very wrong, the only thing that will better it is prayerfully to make a new start, with the resolve not to permit the shadow of that past and gone sin either to hinder us, or to sadden others. It is a helpful thing to remember that every word and action of ours influences all the rest of mankind."

Doris is eagerly watching the speaker as though to let no word escape her.

"Then it is no matter even if I may not have the hopes and joys of other girls,—it is no matter," she says, thoughtfully.

"Nothing is any matter, dear, except to do right now," reiterates Rachel.

"And what did you say I ought to do with my money?"

Miss Saltonstall quakes a little at finding herself an oracle, but she knows this to be a critical moment with Doris. She is not the kind of girl to pass through many an emotional crisis, and this is not the time to hesitate.

"Do good with it in various ways. I do not mean particularly to give it in charity. The ways will open. Its great use," Rachel adds, smiling, "will doubtless be to assist your husband one of these days."

Doris flinches and quivers and turns pale.

"No, not that. Never that," she says drawing back. "That is one of the things not for me," and Rachel, looking at her in surprise, realizes that this is not mere "girl's talk."

"Ah well. We shall see," she says with a shade of embarrassment and yet a lightening of the heart which she does not analyze. "Your duty for the present is plain enough," she adds. "It is to stay with us as long as you are happy."

"And not to borrow trouble," adds Miss Gale.

"Yes. The past cannot be changed, and for the present and future remember the story of the man who said on his death bed that he had had a great deal of trouble in his life, but that half of it never happened. Do not," smiling at Doris and taking her hand with unusual cordiality, "do any more unavailing penance."

"I will not," promises Doris, looking her full in the face with a pair of very earnest and clear, gray eyes, "do any more unavailing penance."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CASTLE BUILDING.

Witting under the elm tree, Dr. Lemist strolls m for a friendly call. He has cause to congratulate himself upon the timing of his visit. He gives Doris a quick, second glance as she greets him, and decides that there is more ground for Lenore's admiration of her than he has realized. He notices that Rachel's serene and dignified manner is affected by an undercurrent of elation, the fact being that the pleasant relief and reaction that has resulted from their interview, bubbles up in the hearts of both young women and overflows upon the lucky visitor. Mr. Burley hearing the pleasant laughter down on the lawn, bestirs himself and approaches.

"How do you do, Doctor? Come over for that boxing match?"

"Is match what you call it? Miss Saltonstall, that cousin of yours enjoys putting his hands into a pair of cushions and then pitching on a little fellow like me, and knocking all the breath out of me in this hot weather when breath is valuable. He calls that pleasure!"

"I call it exercise, Doctor. It's what you need. It will do you all the good in the world."

"For shame, Alan," protests his cousin merrily. "Go and walk to the top of Bald Head. That will take the energy out of you."

"But I prefer punching the Doctor."

That worthy straightens up and looks defiant, "Miss Saltonstall, you shall judge whether any honorable antagonist would behave as your cousin does. We box according to the manual as beginners should; I am a beginner. He makes the attacks in order and I give the successive defenses; but in a minute that becomes monotonous to Mr. Burley, and without a word he begins to skip around in his attacks. For instance, suppose the number two blow to have been duly given and defended, I raise my elbow to ward off number three, and receive, instead, a vigorous six which sends me to grass with a sickening thud, and I insist that I will fight no man ungentlemanly enough to punch me a six attack against a three defence. However, I suppose I shall have to give up in the end," he finishes, sighing and half rising from his chair.

"Not quite yet," remonstrates Rachel. "Alan," severely, "sit down here," pointing to the shawl spread out under her feet, "and listen to a plan mother and I were talking over this morning. We thought, Dr. Lemist, of spending a day at Fair Lake. First impressions are everything, and Miss Gale has seen none of the spots we pride ourselves upon as yet. I propose to show her the best first."

The doctor nods approvingly.

"Do you want to know what I think about it?"

asks Alan, lifting himself half way from the recumbent posture he has obediently taken.

"No. You are simply to obey orders. I shall want you to go with me to Hillside Farm to-morrow."

"In the interests of a day at Fair Lake?"

"Yes."

Mr. Burley makes a hopeless gesture. "As you say; but I warn you that you will receive no encouragement from Hillside Farm. I asked Hepsy the other day how much chance there was of getting bass at Fair Lake, and she responded that there was a sight bigger chance of getting chills and fever, and there was something so withering in the glance of her eye that I pursued the subject no further."

"And, Dr. Lemist," continues Miss Saltonstall, scornfully ignoring her cousin, "I thought it would be very pleasant to invite Miss Fayette. Don't you?"

"Am I fortunately included in this arrangement?"

"O, certainly."

"Then I give my vote decidedly for Miss Fayette." The speaker's endeavors to look unconscious would surely betray him were there the smallest suspicion in the mind of either of his auditors, and he rocks his chair slightly back and forth.

"And mother wishes Miss Fortune to go," says Rachel, a little constrainedly.

"O, so do I!" exclaims Mr. Burley, clasping his hands with gushing enthusiasm.

"Alan!" ejaculates his cousin, frowning with annoyance, and trying not to imitate the doctor by joining in Doris' laugh.

"I don't know why we laugh," objects the latter. "I have a real regard for Miss Fortune because she has proved so true a friend to Miss Fayette," at which the doctor sobers and nods emphatically, repeating in an undertone:

"Very true, very true."

"Is anybody questioning my regard for her?" asks Mr. Burley.

"No. No one cares anything about it," replies his cousin, curtly.

Alan leans upon his elbow and looks toward the window in the wing, through which Miss Fortune can be plainly seen, embarked on the sea of literature. Her pen scribbles fast for a minute and then she looks out at the group under the trees for inspiration. Alan meets one of these glances with an elaborate bow designed to convey distinguished consideration, at which all three of his companions laugh again as Miss Fortune responds to it beamingly.

"What a noble amusement! and how silly we all are," protests Rachel. "I suppose I had better write n note to Miss Fayette."

"I can deliver it without any inconvenience," remarks the doctor. "I shall be passing there before evening." He might add that he has fallen into the way of making the Elmdale road the thoroughfare which leads to every patient.

"Then I will write it at once," and Miss Saltonstall reopens her desk and commences the note. "If you are going to do any boxing," she adds, pausing and glancing up, "don't let me detain you any longer."

Mr. Burley springs to his feet and claps the doctor on the shoulder.

"Will you come and see that there is fair play, Miss Gale?" asks the latter, resignedly.

"Do you hurt each other?" asks Doris, doubtfully.

"I do not hurt Mr. Burley at all," significantly.

"Then he shall not hurt you," responds the girl, decisively. "I will come and see to it."

"Bravo!" exclaims Alan. "We have always needed an umpire," and the three move off together.

The world looks new to Doris since Rachel's talk. She sees the way clear before her as she has never seen it before. All she need guard against is the gloom of borrowed trouble. The Nemesis she fears will probably never come, and if it should there will be time enough to suffer when it is here. It is her religious duty to be cheerful; an easy one she finds it just now, with her two companions who lead the way to the carriage house and install her on a cushioned seat, conveniently near the scene of combat.

The pugilists put on the gloves not without many a comment, and then plunge into the fray in a manner which causes the spectator and umpire to hurt herself with laughter.

The thickset doctor lunges heavily at his springy antagonist, his apprehensive eyes and unconscious grimaces working in sympathy with his short arms. Anon he laughs convulsively as Alan, leaping forward and backward, wards off his adversary's blows, and administers quick exasperating pats on his cheeks. The combat deepens; Doris has no breath left and her

throat is sore. The doctor, very red in the face, striking out wildly, but doughtily, gathers together all his energy makes a massive thrust at the enemy with his pudgy fist, hits him below the belt line, doubles him up, and wins the day.

Then all three sit down to gasp and cool off, and when Rachel comes strolling out, fresh and cool, to see what has become of them, she finds Doris lying back, limply on the front seat of a carriage through the uplifted shafts of which she watches Mr. Burley officiously mopping off the doctor with a huge, coarse sponge.

"How unwise you have been, Dr. Lemist, to let your patient get the upper hand," she says, laughingly. "You should not have let him recover so fast."

"O, I think I was created to disappoint doctors," remarks Mr. Burley, desisting from his efforts, and going over to the carriage. "Have you seen enough, Miss Gale?"

"More than enough."

"She is the best umpire you ever heard of, Rachel," giving Doris his hand and helping her down.

"O, yes. They would not let me get breath enough to speak," asserts Doris.

"Well, here is the note for Miss Fayette," says Miss Saltonstall, holding it up between thumb and finger," if you are *sure* it will not give you too much trouble, Dr. Lemist, because Mr. Burley has really nothing to do, you know."

"That is a libel," protests that young man in an injured tone. "How many letters, taking that alone, do I have to read and answer in a day?"

"About a dozen; but you appear to torget that you make me do all of the writing."

"Do not have a family jar on my account," begs Dr. Lemist. "Give me the note, Miss Saltonstall, I would not miss being the emissary of so pleasant a proposal. We all know that Miss Fayette has none too many friends and none too much variety."

"Has she not enough friends? She is a very sweet little creature," remarks Miss Saltonstall thoughtfully, recalling the pleasure it evidently gave the girl to drive with her up the mountain. "How did her surroundings impress you this morning, Doris?"

"As excessively trying," replies Doris, her eyes growing dark. "I thought I was lonely,"—a half vexed, half embarrassed gesture closes the sentence abruptly.

"Well, you have both found her now," the doctor says, wiping his red face with his handkerchief, "and I am glad you know how she is situated. You just keep on thinking and saying that she is sweet, Miss Saltonstall," with an emphatic and knowing nod, "and others will find it out."

"Unless I am very much mistaken in her," begins Rachel cautiously——

The doctor's heart sinks but he replies desperately. "You are not."

"You are not," echoes Doris earnestly. "She is a charming, innocent, spirited girl;" and she looks so lovely as she says it that Alan does not wonder at the warmth with which the doctor seizes and shakes her hand, although Miss Gale herself is exceedingly surprised, and carries a squeezed sensation in her fingers

which lasts after the doctor has departed and causes her to keep him in mind and even to speculate about him.

"Why, Miss Rachel," she asks, afterward, "is not Dr. Lemist married?"

"I don't know, Doris, but I suspect it is because whoever he married would be liable to be torn in pieces by those he did not marry."

"Is he such a favorite — such a nice, jolly, honest man," and Doris laughs at the recollection of the boxing match.

"O yes. Every one likes him, but," with an impatient air, "men are scarce in New England villages, and if he were not half so nice he would be just as much run after."

"I wish Lenore had seen him box," bursts out Doris, still laughing. "I don't know though," with a sudden recollection of that vise-like grip and the doctor's grateful eyes, "perhaps it is just as well that she did n't. Is it far to the stores, Miss Rachel?"

"Doris, do I look very old to you?"

"Why - why, certainly not."

The two are alone in the parlor and Doris starts at the sudden question.

"Because of my gray hair, and — general appearance."

Doris flushes but meets the questioner with clear eyes. "Very old! That seems absurd to say in connection with you, Miss Rachel. What can you mean?"

"I mean to ask you if you cannot drop the Miss in addressing me."

"I think — I could. I always called you Miss to Miriam. It is my habit. But if you permit and wish it."

"I do; and now you wish to go to the stores. You will not find just the same assortment as on Broadway, but I want a drive, and I will take you if you like."

"Thank you. That will be very pleasant. I wish to get a hammock."

"A hammock! There is a pile of them somewhere about."

"But I mean for Lenore. She has so many good places for one."

"A good idea," and Miss Saltonstall turns thoughtful for a moment. "You say she has few friends?"

"Almost none. It is astonishing. There is some explanation of it which I do not come at."

"You think the fault is not in herself?"

"I am positive of it."

So Miss Saltonstall orders her ponies and in the cool of the afternoon the two young ladies set the village agape by driving down the most populous street; and when they return seed is sown which must spring up and bear fruit of happiness for Lenore. Designing she may be and probably still is, but it will not do pointedly to slight the friend of Miss Saltonstall and Miss Gale—the latter's wealth having multiplied several times since she reached town, and her beauty and style being undisputed.

That evening at supper Miss Saltonstall informs her mother of the progress of the plan for spending a day at Fair Lake. "I will see Hepsy to-morrow," concludes Rachel, and then all will be arranged for."

"It would be a good plan," suggests Mrs. Salton-stall, "for Alan to drive Doris to Hillside Farm. Doris would like the drive, and — and —"

"It would give Alan something to do," adds Mr. Burley. "Do not be afraid to finish, Aunt Catherine. I am aware that my idleness weighs upon your spirits. Alan would be delighted in this case to be employed," and he bows to Miss Gale.

Rachel bites her lips. She has intended herself to be his companion. He might surely remember that. She spoke of it so few hours ago and it would be only graceful in him to await her decision, but Mr. Burley has really forgotten all about her laughing remarks of the afternoon, and nothing remains for her but to acquiesce in the plan, as Doris is sincerely unconscious of disturbing any arrangement, and in fact congratulates herself on the cheerfulness of her own assent as a practical proof that her new leaf is turned in accordance with Rachel's exhortation.

Poor Rachel! She sees them set off the following morning and sighs gently. The day is lovely and clear, the sunlight is reflected from the glossy coats of the ponies. Mr. Burley is talkative and gay, and Doris looks fresh and happy as the morning; but Miss Saltonstall looks after her with shadowed eyes and breathes a gentle sigh. It is a pity that Doris should be here. It is not her fault, and she is abstractly a charming person; but all the same it is a pity.

"They make a pretty couple," remarks Mrs. Saltonstall, eyeing them critically as they drive off. "Do not call Alan pretty," remonstrates her daughter, impatiently, coming up the piazza steps. "His worst enemy can not accuse him of that."

"Does not a very probable outcome to this visit occur to you, Rachel?" asks Mrs. Saltonstall, so absorbed in her own speculations that she does not heed the tide of red that surges up to her daughter's forehead at her words.

Miss Saltonstall does not cast down her eyes. She fixes them, large, and handsome, and wistful, on her mother's face.

"Well, mother, you could not object. In fact, you have always behaved toward Alan more like a mother than an aunt. He is old enough now, and his professional reputation fixed enough for him to marry. And as for me," with a little laugh, "I was born five years too soon. I am as old as he is."

"O, you, my child," looking fondly at her daughter and taking her hand affectionately, "how could I ever let you marry! Do not speak of that. But about Alan, we might both have thought of this when we invited Doris down here. I have never," emphatically, "up to this time, seen the right one for him, and I have been terribly afraid that some of these foolish girls who have been so infatuated with his voice would succeed in conquering him. Now I see how absolutely Doris is the woman, and yet," with a burst of delight and surprise at her own disinterestedness, "I never thought of it when I asked her down here—I never thought of it at all until she came out here this morning to get into the phæton."

"Mother!" Rachel exclaims, the sharpness of pain in her tone as she draws her hand away. "You sound very mercenary."

"The money is a good thing, but that is not all," says Mrs. Saltonstall stoutly. "Doris has plenty of advantages without that. If it were not so, you know very well," straightening up and speaking in an injured tone, "that I should not think of her."

"It is of no use for you to think of her," replies the other, recovering herself and biting her lips. "Do you recollect how hurt and frightened she seemed in New York when you spoke to her of marrying?"

"Why, yes, I do. I remember we thought she had some romantic ideas about Dr. Reid; but do you imagine," with deep scorn, "that she can remember that fat old fellow when she is with Alan Burley?"

Rachel laughs in spite of herself, but immediately becomes grave. "She is thinking of somebody, mother. I do not know whether he is fat or thin, but I am positive she is thinking of him; and you will save yourself a great disappointment if you do not build any chateaux en espagne of which Doris is to be mistress. Also," in a colder tone, "it seems to me that you are disposing of Alan in rather a high-handed manner."

"Well, I am sure it is strange if with your clearness of perception you cannot see how fascinated he is by her. I have been thinking it over, and it seems to me I can put my finger upon several occasions when he has shown unusual interest. Look at his actions this morning! It occurred to me, Rachel, standing here, that Alan had waked up."

A great deal seems to have occurred to you standing here, mother," responds the other with light scorn. "I am quite sure you are mistaken about Alan, and am positive about Doris. I had a very confidential talk with her yesterday, and she said, in such a way as to leave no doubt,—indeed, she was nearly tragical,—that she could never marry."

"Now why could that be!" exclaims Mrs. Saltonstall, with a kind of exasperated impatience. She has been too pleased with her project to abandon it easily.

"I confess that I have been wondering," replies Rachel, candidly, "although I think it is very weak, almost low, to wish to pry into it. It is Doris' affair, but I soberly assure you you cannot hurt her more than by speaking to her on the subject; so be careful not to let your ardor carry you away."

"You cautioned me before, in New York, you know," returns Mrs. Saltonstall rather sullenly, "and by a broad streak of good fortune I have not offended yet. But I tell you what I shall do, Rachel. I shall speak to Alan. If you are sure you are right about Doris I shall speak to him. I am not going to allow that dear boy to experience the misery of an unreciprocated affection!"

Mrs. Saltonstall speaks determinedly, and her daughter only raises her eyebrows.

"You can do as you please about that," she seems to say, and turns into the house with a bruised sensation about the heart for which she ridicules herself.

"Mother is the best of women," she thinks, "but not the wisest, not the brightest and clearest-sighted. Dear mother!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

#### HILLSIDE FARM.

TES. SALTONSTALL'S project of warning her nephew not to lose his heart will come a little late, even if she carries it out promptly. He has never felt so sure of his own state of mind as on this morning, when he drives away with Doris. The gaiety and repressed excitement which roused Aunt Catherine's rather sluggish imagination, disappear when he finds himself alone with the woman who as yet feels it so little moving to be alone with him. He becomes all at once quiet. The basket carriage is a little world, and he and Doris are the inhabitants. Her sphere is tranquilizing, and he could be content to drive on forever in this silent companionship. But such is impossible where entire sympathy is not, and he, knowing that the moments are few and precious, makes no sound or motion to break the spell of the summer morning. There is a half smile on Doris's lips, and her eyes are seeing something far away; but with a start she suddenly recollects herself and stirs a little, drawing her white shawl higher about her shoulders.

"Excuse me," she says, adding naïvely, "I forgot that I was not alone."

Mr. Burley smiles at her with very open and tender

admiration. "That might be understood in various ways," he says. "I prefer to take it as a broad compliment."

She does not quite know what to do with his look, so she averts her face with an air which warns him.

- "You must be ingenious to turn it into that," she replies. "However, if you are in need of one that alters the case. I suppose you miss your daily supply. If you would only sing more for us perhaps you would find us more apt at compliment than you imagine."
  - "Have I ever refused to sing for you?"
- "Well,—let me see," with a pretty air of meditation; "I have thought of asking you several times."
  - "But I am not clairvoyant."
- "Do you mean," looking around at him half earnestly, half playfully, "that you will sing for me whenever I ask you?"
  - "Always."
- "Ah! How proud you make me! I have already written to a lady friend in New York that I am staying in the house with you. I allowed her to infer that I heard you a great deal. But now I shall say distinctly that you sing for us every day, and I shall take care to make it true. I wonder," meeting his eyes again and twisting the fringe on her wrap, "what you would say if you knew how I used to feel about you."
  - "Can it be turned into a compliment?"
  - "Not possibly."
  - "Do you feel the same way now?"
  - "O no!" emphatically, "not at all!"

"Then why rake up old wrongs? I forgive you blindly."

"But I feel as though you ought to know how conseited and vain I thought you were."

Mr. Burley laughs. "At any rate you have told me now."

"Well, I've had it on my mind. Are you shy, Mr. Burley?" Miss Gale asks this, closing her gray eyes slightly and evidently thirsting for information.

"Perhaps so; but I never knew it."

"Do you remember the day I arrived?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Well," very earnestly, "I would not believe that you, driving here with me now, pleasant and goodactured—"

"Eureka! That's a compliment any way. Wait tall I land it."

"Could possibly be the man I met that day in Miss Saltonstall's parlor. Do you know how you behaved?"

"No," with great interest, "I've forgotten that."

"The best thing you could do!" remarks Miss Gale sententiously.

"Crushed again!" murmurs her companion sotto

"Before that, I had only seen you," continues the girl, excitedly, "very much dressed up, and with your company manner, or stage manner, or whatever it is, singing Rubenstein songs and being wildly applauded, and I thought at that time, as I looked at you, 'How happy he must be. I should like to know him. 1

wonder if he is spoiled. I am certain he must be very conceited.' You see I knew whe you were. Miriam often spoke to me of cousin Alan, and so it was not such a great surprise to me to find you here that day. The only surprise was in yourself. Now I am not conceited. I have no excuse to be, but I do not fancy being looked at as you looked at me that day. Why your manner was—was intolerable. If you had not been so pale, and had not appealed to my sympathies in that way I should not have borne it so well. Why, when I got upstairs I looked in the glass to see if I had a black on my nose or any other disfigurement to give you an excuse for staring so."

"That was truly modest in you, Miss Gale," Alan answers, laughing. "You might have put a different interpretation on my behavior. You might have supposed me dazzled or —"

"That will do. I have not your appetite for flattery;" then with a plaintive change of tone, "Please don't talk to me in that way, only tell me if you were shy, or cross or—I am in earnest about wanting to know, I like to understand things and it will not offend or hurt me at all—were you sorry to have a stranger come? Were you sorry to see me?"

- "I was not precisely glad to see you, and yet-"
- "Now do not apologize, or anything else. You will spoil it all."
  - "Spoil what?"
  - "Our frankness."
  - "But is it not becoming a little alarming?"
  - "Not at all. As I said, I really like to understand

things at any cost. You were vexed that I had been invited. You did not feel like exerting yourself to be polite to a stranger, and you had not had time to prepare a mask. That is right. It relieves me to have it explained. I like people," with a forced laugh, and a nervous bite of her lower lip, "that do not slip easily into a mask."

"Is it explained to your satisfaction?" Alan asks gravely.

"O, perfectly. You had a right to feel so, and yet, it is not pleasant to me to know that even for a day my presence was a trial to any member of the family."

"Ah. You do me the justice to believe that it was only for a day."

"I am not sure," cautiously. "It might have been longer. I was not watching."

"That you were not," replies Mr. Burley heartily, with an amused smile. "You certainly have looked over and under and through me a sufficient number of times since, to punish me if I had been sorry to see you."

"If you had been! Why you just acknowledged that you were vexed that I had come."

"I beg your pardon. That was your explanation, but you seem so pleased with it, it is almost a pity to disturb your satisfaction."

"Then have I not reached the bottom of it yet?" with a deprecating gesture.

"You are not even half-way down."

"Very well. I insist upon knowing. Do you care

anything at all for my friendship? Remember how fond I am of frankness."

"Yes, I care a great deal for your friendship as a

beginning," Mr. Burley says quietly.

"Well, you will have it only on condition that you give me a satisfactory explanation of your conduct on the day I arrived in Alderley."

"If I do you must allow me to ask you a very personal question, first."

"Very well," faintly and doubtfully, "only of course I do not promise to answer it."

"No. Miss Gale, were you ever in love?"

Doris looks away, not shyly. A troubled, puzzled shade comes over her face, and for a minute she makes no reply. Then she turns back, sharply, as though to speak resentfully, but the entire absence of flippancy in her companion's face, and the shining of his steady gaze tempers her speech.

"It is not nice of you to ask me that, Mr. Burley."

"Perhaps not. Then it would be impossible for me to tell you why the first sight of you moved me so."

Doris is disconcerted and silenced. Innocent of intent as she knows herself to be, she nevertheless experiences the sudden and disagreeable sensation of having been caught prying. It is a relief to her to see Dr. Lemist approaching on the sidewalk. He pauses as he bows, and Mr. Burley reins in the ponies.

"Good morning," cries the doctor, blithely. "Is it Hillside Farm?"

"Yes," replies Alan. "Miss Saltonstall says this

is one of the days when Hepsy is at home to her friends."

"Yes, she doesn't come down to-day, and I am anxious to get a message to her. That is the reason I made bold to stop you. Will you tell her, please, that I have received an answer to the advertisement about the dog?"

"I will endeavor."

"Tell her he was lost by a man traveling over the mountain in a wagon to the next village."

"All right."

"And, wait a minute," here the doctor produces his pocket-book.

"Don't try to bribe me, my dear fellow."

"Hear me out. Hear me out. Give Hepsy this five dollar bill which the owner of the dog sent in the fullness of his gratitude that the animal was found, and tell her if she will bring the terrier down I will box him—"

"But you can't box!"

"Well, I'll learn if only to thrash you — would n't you, Miss Gale? Now be sure and make Hepsy understand that I will attend to sending off the dog for her if she will bring him down."

"I dare say that Miss Gale and I, between us, shall convey the right idea. Good morning."

"Good morning." A lovely day, is n't it, Miss Gale?

"I like Dr. Lemist," announces Doris after bowing and bestowing her sweetest smile upon him.

"He's a jolly fellow, and deserves something better than this stupid place to labor in."

"Why! Aren't you having a good time?" Doris asks, in blank surprise.

"A perfect time. If the universe should be searched for the greatest pleasure that could be bestowed upon me, nothing could be found more desirable than to be driving in this carriage, with these ponies, on this morning,—with you."

The girl colors and looks vexed. "Extravagance is cheap," she says.

"I thought it was dear."

"It is not dear to me. Remember that, please."

"Miss Gale, you wish to quarrel with me, but I shall not gratify you. You don't know what a novel sensation it is to be in this phæton and yet to have the reins in my own hands. Rachel is very chary of letting any one else handle her ponies, yet see how much better they go for me than for her."

"Horses are always that way," remarks Doris, with a curling lip. "They always impose on women."

"And I must say I dislike to be a passenger," replies Mr. Burley. "I like to drive, but not to be driven. Would it amuse you to take the reins?"

"What charming tact you possess," laughs Doris.
"I do not wish to be amused at any such sacrifice.
Besides we are coming to the mountain road. How pretty and green it all is. The idea of pitying Dr. Lemist for living in a place like this."

"This is very picturesque," admits Alan, leaning back as the ponies trot up the gentle ascent, "and the wind among these trees always has an æolian harp effect. It never seems to get down very far, but

whispers and sings away up, out of reach. Yet the people of the village never seem to come here—except the farming folk whose homes lie beyond. It is always still, and green, and mysterious."

"And yet you pity Dr. Lemist?"

"Ah, but think of the long, cold New England winter with its monotonous indoor life."

"Nonsense. Think of the sleighing, wrapped up for comfort, with none to criticize your looks. Think of the purity of the snow all unmixed with city mud. Think of the way it lies drifted under these pines and weighs down their branches with a spotless burden."

"Yes, I am willing to think of it. I like exceedingly to hear you talk about it, but I am very glad that while your fancy is materializing, I shall be dining at the club with a hot-house rose in my button-hole."

"Ugh," groans Doris, in disgust. "What a sybarite! Do not the squirrels and birds rebuke you? Oh!" giving a very real shriek, and leaning out over the side of the phæton, "We very nearly ran over a hop-toad!"

"So you draw the line at a nice little sylvan 'hop-toad' do you?" says Alan, and then they both laugh.

"This, I suppose, is Hillside Farm," he continues, when they arrive as directed at the first dwelling to be seen at the right of the road. No one is in sight as Alan steps out of the carriage to let down the bars that guard the entrance. These are not always in use, but to-day Hepsy being at home, her cows are being allowed the liberty of her roomy door-yard. Mr. Burley restores the bars with some clatter, which sum

mons a leaping, barking Scotch terrier, who wakes the echoes until he fully comprehends the respectability of Miss Saltonstall's equipage and guests, when he endeavors to turn off his mistake by running at a sober black cow. She meets him with her horns, sending him on a brisk scamper back to his mistress, who appears at the door of a wood-shed adjoining the house, to see what the uproar is about.

"Mr. Burley!" she exclaims, in a pleased voice, hurrying forward and wiping her hands on the largeclean apron that envelops her.

"Yes, Miss Nash, you see I remembered your invitation," Alan replies, coming forward and shaking hands. "Miss Gale," turning to Doris sitting in the phæton, "this is Miss Nash."

Hepsy drops a curtsey whose elaborateness is not impeded by the apron.

"We have met before, Miss Nash," Doris says, smiling. "I think you told me the way to Elmdale."

"Yes, marm," responds Hepsy, confidently. "I knowed you right off by your hair. You'll get out o' the wagon, won't you?"

Miss Gale looks questioningly at her escort.

"Oh, by all means," he replies, giving her his hand.
"We came on an errand, Miss Nash—I have it somewhere in my pocket—"

"Well, hitch the hosses right here," she replies, beaming hospitably, and with her own hand leading the ponies to a tree near by.

"Won't they chew the Jeaves?" asks Doris, dubiously.

"I hope not for their sakes," replies the other, drily. "They won't find 'em nourishin'. That there tree," standing back with her hands on her hips, eyeing it darkly, "has made me more trouble than any one on the place. It's a pear tree an' it's been just alive with vermin, but a few weeks ago here I took an' kerosened it to all intents an' purposes. Think ses I it'll either kill or cure it. It looks pretty spindlin' now —I don't believe the hosses'll trouble it any. Come in, come in," and Doris and Alan follow their hostess, the former casting rather dubious glances at the black cow who is staring at her with the sinister expression which it gives a cow to stop chewing to concentrate her attention.

"Come in," repeats Hepsy, throwing open the door of her parlor and threading her way easily through its Cimmerian darkness. Her guests hesitate until she throws open the shutters and lifts the shades, disclosing the hair-cloth furniture and painted floor, covered here and there with stiff rugs fashioned of rags woven in hard coils.

"Take the lounge, Miss Gale," and the hostess indicates a square backed sofa, its high seat in a pristine state of bulge and polish.

Miss Gale sits down upon it carefully, bracing her feet, while Alan takes a chair.

"Are you never lonely up here, Miss Nash?" asks the former.

"No," replies Hepsy, folding her arms. "You see I'm only home two days in the week. At first I like to died them days, but I've got over it now. Where I

was raised down in Maine on the sea coast we was a big family. My father's brothers and sisters, they did live to all intents and purposes. There was eleven of 'em. There was my father, he was one; there was Aunt Delight, she was two; then there was Uncle Gilead, he was three—an' 't was Uncle Gilead brought me here. He married a Connecticut woman an' come up here to farm; then my father died, an' my Uncle had me come up an' put me in at Elmdale as help."

"Then you are Miss Fayette's friend. She spoke to me of you."

Hepsy's cheerful face becomes overcast, and she shakes her head. "I wish I saw some things plainer than I do," she says emphatically and mysteriously, avoiding her visitor's eye.

"Don't you miss the sea?" asks Mr. Burley, his eyes fascinated by a china animal on the mantel, a white wooden structure, supposed to represent marble by the gray or blue lines which wriggle over it.

"O I'd like to snuff it well enough," admits Hepsy changing countenance with a short laugh," but I was n't a very c'rageous youngster. I never wanted to get far from terry firm. What I miss is the fish and the stories; they was both good. There was one old man that come to my father's house evenin's just to listen," and Hepsy props her chin on one hand, resting her elbow in the palm of the other. "'T was old Jotham Fry. He'd set an' listen to the yarns for a while an' then he'd bolt out o' the house without sayin' a word. He was sort o' cracked in the upper

story - kind o' luny. He never did no harm, but as I say I was n't a very c'rageous child and I sh'd a been scared to death if he'd spoke to me. That there man would do the queerest things. For instance, let a thunder storm come on an' he'd go to the mill pend an' every time a flash come, he'd dive into the water Sometimes if he wa'nt handy to the pond he'd make for a tree an' dodge 'round the trunk to get it between him an' the lightnin'. We little scamps used to love to watch him. He had an idea that there was some sort o' spirits that was enemies to him an' that they made the lightnin' tryin' to shoot him. 'Mount Glissers' he called 'em. I don't know where he got the name. Sort o' made it up I s'pose. Once my father met him comin' from the pond an' he said 'he thought the Mount Glissers would 'a drownded him, they fired so fast an' kep' him divin' so.' Part the time he worked on a vessel he'd ben buildin' most of his life. He cut every plank himself with a broad axe, an' of course by the time he got at the upper part, the lower part was all rottin' away, an' the poor feller laid that to the 'Mount Glissers.' He said they done that to spite him. How well I remember the old gun he used to carry 'round with him - a reg'lar old flint-lock that he bought of an Injun. He spiked it up an' carried it wherever he went."

"It would n't shoot, then," remarks Mr. Burley.

"No; you see he thought the Injun must have been an enemy in disguise; for the first time he shot the gun he was up on the Neck shooting at a Whistler, you know what a Whistler is — a pretty little sea-bird all feathered out nice — can't think of the real name, we called 'em Whistlers. Well, he shot at a Whistler an' the gun kicked, an' knocked him over, an' he thought the 'Mount Glissers' was tryin' to shoot him with the wrong end of it; after that he spiked it up an' always carried it with him so's it should n't kill anybody. Well, I declare!" adds Hepsy, beaming upon her smiling visitors and jerking her head backwards. "What set me off talkin' about home. I don't very often get to thinkin' o' those old times. I'm weaned to all intents an' purposes; but your referrin' to the sea sort o' brought up father's kitchen, an' father's friends settin' 'round the fire with Jotham Fry in a corner, ready to bolt when the sperit moved him."

"What became of the eccentric Jotham?"

"He got drownded tryin' to cut the ice off the mill-wheel. Got ketched in it somehow. Well," with a brisk accession of interest, "how's your voice gettin' along, Mr. Burley?" here an elaborate wink at Doris. "Been practicin' any lately? Got so folks'll let you come closter to the village than that ravine?"

Mr. Burley laughs. "I never went there again, Miss Nash. You frightened me out of it."

"Humph! The fright was two-sided then. But," smiling on each guest in turn, "can't we have some music? Won't you give us a tune? My melodeon," here Hepsy rises complacently, "aint no great things, still it's better than no instrument. I aint no great musicianer myself. You need n't be a mite afraid o' me."

While she is opening the melodeon, Doris casts one

eloquent glance at Mr. Burley, which comes near to destroying his laudable gravity.

"Here's 'The Sabbath Bell,'" continues Hepsy.
"Perhaps you can find somethin' in that that you know—or anythin', just suit yourself. I like to hear folks sing vocal music, I don't care what it is. I wisht I looked a little more like havin' company," she adds, breaking off to glance over her huge apron. "I might a slicked back my hair if Ino had n't made such a goose of himself; but you'll excuse it. Now, what's it agoin' to be, Mr. Burley?"

"Well, I hardly know. Miss Gale has never accompanied me."

"O, I could n't do it, you know," interposes the young lady, hastily, casting a side glance at the awful little instrument which she knows will be shrill in inverse proportion to its size.

Mr. Burley sees his hostess' face grow narrow with disappointment. "O, I imagine something might be done," he says, good-naturedly.

Doris throws him an appealing glance, but Alan is evidently as determined to sing on this occasion as on some far more propitious ones he has been not to do so.

"Can't you suggest something yourself, Miss Nash?" he asks.

"To tell the truth," replies Hepsy, with an air of candor, "I don't think there's a tune that can hold up it's head with good — old — 'America!'"

"How is it, Miss Gale?" asks Alan, with a smile, can you stir up enough patriotism for the occasion?"

"Oh, yes. I can play America," replies Doris, resigning herself, and rising with assumed alacrity.

Hepsy places a chair for her at the melodeon and then goes back to the window.

Miss Gale strikes a few chords intended to be a dignified prelude, laughs convulsively but silently at the effect, and Mr. Burley, standing beside her, his back to the instrument, breaks gloriously into the fervent melody. The great vibrant waves of his voice fill the little room until it seems as though the ceiling must lift. He is not in a stingy mood, and the simple auditor in her plain, coarse surroundings, gets his magnificent best.

Hepsy stares at the singer with growing wonder. Her eyes distend, her narrow chin falls.

"I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills,
My soul with rapture thrills
Like that above!"

Doris' breast heaves, and she holds her breath while governing the restive *George A. Prince* with an inspired skill born of the circumstances. Great tears gather in Hepsy's eyes and fall disregarded on her apron, and when the song ceases, she stamps her feet and hammers both knees with her doubled fists in an ecstasy of delight.

"Oh, there! Oh, dear! Forever!" she ejaculates, winking hard and grimacing unconsciously. "I did n't know folks could, you know — not in this world," and with a manner as incoherent as her words the enraptured woman starts up, rushes toward Alan as though

to embrace him, stops in time, catches Doris to her breast in a brief, muscular hug, and, with a muffled apology, darts out of the room.

Doris recovers her breath with a little, amazed gasp, and looks up at her companion with shining eyes.

"I know just how she feels!" she exclaims, and the favorite singer meets her look with an ardor that it can not sustain. He has never felt applause like this. But before he can speak the door is swung open again and Miss Nash marches in, trying valiantly to look as though nothing had happened.

"We must not forget business in pleasure," remarks Mr. Burley at last. "Miss Saltonstall is planning a day at Fair Lake, and she has sent you this list of things she would like you to provide. It is here in my pocket, somewhere. Yes, here."

Hepsy takes the paper and runs her eye over it, nodding her head as she notes each item. "Now," slipping it into her capacious pocket, "just set a minute an' I'll fetch in some milk and ginger cake."

"I should like some," assents Doris, "but not in the parlor. Could n't you let us go—somewhere else?"

"Why, yes, all over the house," replies the hostess, cordially. "'T would be more comfortable out by the table, p'raps," and she leads the way to her spotless kitchen where the atmosphere is cool and infinitely fresher than in the higher-toned apartment.

Ino, who has been asleep on the door-stone, comes in wagging his stubby tail. As soon as he sees the plate of gingerbread and the foaming glasses of milk he sits up, with forepaws thrown back, and in this

attitude turns from this side to that as Hepsy moves back and forth, meanwhile sending out the ghost of a lugubrious whine through his eager nose.

Of course the visitors laugh, and then Hepsy changes her frown to a smile. "Dear me, Ino, if you hain't got cheek; but you know," shaking her finger at him, "dogs don't get fed in this house. You can have all you want out doors."

"But how prettily he begs," says Doris. "Can't he have a little piece of gingerbread? Does he like it?"

"Yes, he likes it," says Miss Nash, looking at the little fellow fondly, "but he'd rather have butter on it."

"Ah, that reminds me," says Mr. Burley, setting down his glass empty, "I came near forgetting. We met Dr. Lemist on the way up. He gave men rather mysterious message about some dog. Some one, he says, has answered the advertisement who lost a dog going over this hill in a wagon! Miss Gale, was the doctor's rhetoric just like mine?"

Hepsy's face lengthens, even turns a little pale.

"Then Ino's found, and I've lost him," she ejaculates.

"O, Miss Nash, must you give up that bright little dog!" says Doris, sympathetically, and here the bright little dog so far forgets his polished manners as to yelp distinctly, under the cruel exasperation of the viands set out so near and yet so far from him.

Hepsy mechanically butters a large slice of the gingerbread and sets it in a plate before him.

"Yes, I s'pose I have," she replies with stony composure. "I never used to think much o' dogs, but this one was a good deal o' company."

"And here is a five dollar bill," says Mr. Burley, producing it, "I came near forgetting that too." He hands it to Hepsy who looks at it in perplexity.

"Dr. Lemist sent it. It is from the man who lost the dog who went over the hill in a wagon!"

But Hepsy's New England blood comes streaming back into her face—she holds out the bill scornfully.

"You can give it back to him," she says shortly, "Five dollars aint goin' to pay me for Ino; but there!" turning away, "that's fuss enough to make about a dog. What else did the doctor say?"

Mr. Burley looks at the money, now in his own hand, doubtfully, but obeys Doris' pantomimic order to put it in his pocket.

"He said if you would bring the dog down he would see to boxing him and sending him off."

"Oh. Thank you. Miss Gale, could n't you drink another glass of milk?"

But Miss Gale has had sufficient to eat and drink, and try as their hostess does to be brisk and talkative, she cannot conceal from her guests that they have dealt her a blow, and almost immediately they take their departure.

The sound of the ponies' nimble hoofs has died away before Miss Nash returns from putting up the bars. Ino is trotting along beside her, exacting her attention by all sorts of gambols. Her eyes fill as she looks at him. She stoops down and takes his shaggy head between her hard hands. "Was the man with the wagon good to you, Ino?" she asks. "Who'll take care o' me when you're gone? I like you first rate. You're rather forth-puttin', an' have got consid'able opinion o' yourself, but I'd got to countin' on you. I wisht you could stay with me, little Ino."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## UPS AND DOWNS.

R. LEMIST perfidiously refrains from carrying Rachel's note to Lenore on the afternoon on which it is written. He knows that at this hour he should be obliged to go to the house, probably see only a much older and less lovable maid than Lenore, and thereby lose altogether the pleasure and profit of his welcome message; so, feeling his guilt to the utmost, yet unrepentant, he goes home to a cottage kept by a wrinkled old lady who has the matchless virtue of never speaking unless spoken to. Here he eats his supper, sees a couple of patients and goes early to bed, with Lenore's name in Miss Saltonstall's square, firm, handwriting under his pillow.

In the morning he sits through his office hour, receives and opens his mail, finds therein the letter from Ino's owner, then starts forth for Elmdale. Meeting Mr. Burley and Miss Gale he gives them the message for Hepsy and so, unencumbered by a care, goes on his way. He meets no one to be astonished by the unusual spectacle of Dr. Lemist separated from his buggy, and walks along with a solid step, full of the picture he knows is to be found on a bright morning by the ruined greenhouse.

A little brook shining and sparkling; a mass of red

flowers in a grassy expanse; a young girl bending over them; a small, insignificant, poorly dressed girl, lovelier in his eyes than anything else that the world holds. A little later his fancy becomes material. He stands by the mound of woodbine, watching Lenore at her work as she now pulls out a weed, and now loosens the earth about the roots of a plant with her trowel, singing meanwhile, softly, snatches of a ballad:

"Elle n'etais qu'une fillétte, Je n'etais qu'un ecolier, Elle est morte en Fevrier Pauvre, pauvre Colinette."

"Good morning," says the visitor.

Lenore turns quickly. "Ah, good morning, Dr. Lemist," she cries, springing up, "I am so, so glad to see you."

"Are you?" he responds radiantly, coming nearer.

"O yes, because I wanted so much to tell some one who would sympathize. My aunt does not sympathize, she does not care. I wonder if she ever cared about anything!"

"What has happened? Something to give you pleasure?"

"Well, see what you think," replies Lenore. "Look at this," drawing her caller toward a new and roomy rustic sofa, "and look at this," lifting a card tied to it by a bit of ribbon.

Dr. Lemist reads aloud the writing on the card. "Dear Miss Lenore. Allow me to contribute this seat to your favorite corner, hoping that you will sometimes let me occupy it with you. Yours, Rachel Saltonstall."

"Good! Good!" exclaims the doctor.

"And that is not all. See," lifting a heap of netting lying near by on the ground, "here is another card."

The doctor stoops, and reads again. "Dear Lenore: Here are a couple of hammocks. Please have them ready for us to enjoy a luxurious téte-à-téte the next time I come. Yours, Doris Gale."

"And that is not all!" exclaims Lenore, in a perfect crescendo of delight. "Miss Saltonstall has sent me a couple of odd geraniums such as I had none like, with another sweet little card."

"Well, well!" exclaims Dr. Lemist, reddening with satisfaction. "I suppose each one of the three gifts came from a different store?"

"Yes, they did, so that arriving one at a time I began to feel that it was my fête day. Was it not great kindness?"

The doctor nods with sufficient evidence of pleasure to satisfy even the enthusiastic girl. He understands these gifts in a broad sense; knowing the magic power for good possessed by the three bits of pasteboard hanging open for every clerk and errand boy to read.

"And now you would like me to put up these hammocks for you."

"Ah, that would be too much," says Lenore with dancing eyes that belie her grave protestation.

"No, indeed, I should like to do it."

"Thank you," in a tone of relief. "See," showing the side of her brown hand scratched, "that is what I did to myself, trying to put one up."

The doctor takes the hand for closer inspection, and is so long a time making up his mind as to the extent of the injury that Lenore grows impatient.

"It does not hurt me any," she says. "Shall I show you where I want them hung? Here," drawing her hand gently away, "is this not a perfect place? They can swing, you see, without hitting each other, and yet it is close."

"You sit here on your new sofa, and watch me," suggests the doctor.

"Ah, that will be luxurious," replies Lenore, obeying, and leaning back comfortably with her small feet crossed.

Lucky it is for those of the neighbors who know by this time that "that Fayette girl is hand and glove with the folks at the Saltonstalls," that they need not suffer the further shock of seeing their paragon physician working away with his coat off to hang two hammocks at the precise height to suit her little ladyship, while she lounges in the easiest position she can find, and gives her orders with great satisfaction.

"I do think you are too kind for anything," she says, when the task is finished and the doctor reinvested in his coat. "Come right here and sit down and get rested."

He takes the offered place beside her, with a laugh at the idea of fatigue, in an exuberantly happy state of mind.

"I shall certainly like Alderley so long as these young ladies stay," says Lenore, meditatively, with a glance over her new possessions.

"That is a little hard on us who will be left behind, I think."

"Oh, if they were all as kind as you!" she remarks, quickly and carelessly.

"But if I could be kind enough for all?" he suggests.

"You are very good to me. You have been from the first, I appreciate it," she finishes with a gay little nod.

The doctor sighs a little.

"I have brought you something this morning from Miss Saltonstall. It is a note of invitation."

"An invitation!" exclaims the girl eagerly. "I think I should like an invitation."

"You are getting to be a *connoisseur* in good things," remarks the doctor with a smile, handing her the note. "You will like this, I am confident."

It does not take Lenore long to master its contents. "Oh, how delightful! A whole day with them," she cries, looking up.

"And with me," he suggests.

"Are you going too? Oh, are you not glad?"

"Yes; are n't you?"

"Certainly. I wish you to enjoy yourself."

This is a damper. The doctor summons all his philosophy, sorely tried by Lenore's ingenuous indifference. What would he have all at once? he asks himself reproachfully. His heart has yearned so over the neglected, lonely, and sad young stranger. Well, she is no longer neglected, and lonely, and sad. Why should he not be satisfied? Surely all he wants, the

best he can hope for, is to see her happy. She is happy. Let that suffice to appease his growing hunger.

"Who else goes?" inquires Lenore after a medita-

tive silence.

"Mr. Burley and Miss Fortune. Well," rising, "this is all the vacation I must allow myself to-day."

"Do not hurry away. I have so much time. Oh, I have not told you! I was so occupied with good fortune that I have not told you my misfortune."

The doctor immediately re-seats himself and looks deep into the dark eyes.

"I want you to tell me everything that concerns you, Miss Lenore."

"That is good of you, and for some reason I always wish more to tell you than any one else. Why do you take so much interest in me, Dr. Lemist?"

They are looking steadily at each other. Lenore never seemed so tenderly youthful and innocent to him as now.

"You have been so much alone until your friend came, you know," he replies, quietly.

"You must not give me up just because she has come," says the girl, relapsing into her arch manner. "She will desert me, but you must remain faithful."

"I will remain faithful," and the doctor takes her hand and lifts it to his lips.

She laughs out merrily. "You kissed the scratch."

"Did I? I will try again," and he does. "Now what is this misfortune, Lenore?"

"I have lost my pupils!"

"How is that?"

The girl shakes her head mournfully. "I do not know the reason. Mrs. Fortune wrote that I might discontinue the lessons. That is all."

The doctor looks sternly into space, and mutters something unintelligible.

"I am sorry, principally because it will assure my aunt that my efforts to teach would always fail, and she will—will despise me more than ever."

Lenore's sweet eyes filling with tears are more than her companion can endure philosophically.

"It is a shame. Do not mind it. You will prove yet that you are competent. You have two powerful friends now, Lenore. You will find your popularity increase as it becomes known, and you will find pupils, and succeed in keeping them. Mrs. Fortune is jealous, that is all. She would prefer that you were never admitted into that house by the front door. I dislike to tell you this; but let it encourage you. It is by no fault of yours that you have lost your pupils."

His ardor surprises Lenore. The tears vanish.

"You believe in me, do you not? Thank you. You give me trust in myself." Both her hands are in his, and Dr. Lemist finds it impossible to sit thus another moment without kissing her; so he rises abruptly, and immediately takes his leave.

"Until Thursday," cries Lenore, brightly, after him. Thursday is the day appointed for the picnic, and to-day is Tuesday. "Shall I go in and tell Aunt Deborah about it, and ask her permission now?" queries the girl of herself. "No. She will not care one way or the other, and I have not tried my ham-

mock yet," and rolling into one of the swinging couches, she sighs at a pain in her left side, turns over upon her right, gazes up through a net-work of branches at the cloudless firmament; notes a tiny bird's nest, which seems very close to heaven, and in a minute more has forgotten friends and enemies, good fortune and bad, in a light and dreamless slumber.

When she wakes, a little time passes before she can realize her whereabouts. So soon as it dawns upon her that she has been asleep in the hammock, she springs out, again getting that sharp pain by the movement.

"What time is it? What will Aunt Deborah say to me?" she thinks, hurrying into the house and confronting that amiable personage, who gives her a short, withering glance, and goes on with her occupation of dusting the parlor; for it is in that august apartment that Lenore finds her.

"I fell asleep, Aunt Deborah. Is it past dinner time?" she asks with a trumped-up display of courage, the warm color not yet out of the cheek she has lain upon.

"Idleness, Lenore," drones Miss Belden, "brought your mother to an evil end, and it will you, I fear."

"I will not have you say my mother came to an evil end. An unhappy end, an unfortunate end, even a miserable end, you may say, though I doubt if it were so; but an evil end, never. My mother was good, and lovely, and incapable of evil," and Lenore looks up at the unsmiling picture of the pretty child.

"I will not dispute so capable a judge of good and evil as yourself. I will simply say you are a very useless, idle girl." Oh, the concentrated scorn and dislike of the low tone! Lenore flinches and grows pale under it.

"For heaven's sake," she says beseechingly, "give me something to do, Aunt Deborah."

"You are fit for nothing. Not even it seems to teach your father's foolish gibberish."

"You have been reading Mrs. Fortune's letter!" cries Lenore, standing straight and breathing fast.

Her aunt lifts her stealthy eyes and looks at her full. "Did you wish to have a secret correspondence?"

The girl turns with a sob and rushes out of the room. The great clock in the hall strikes one. An hour past dinner time; but Lenore is choking and could not eat. She flies up to her room without any settled purpose but to escape that scorpion tongue.

O for one calm, restful talk with sweet sister Ursule at the convent. The girl feels terribly the need of some strength other than her own; not Miss Gale's, not Dr. Lemist's, not that of any mortal. She sinks upon her knees beside the bed, and pours out a flood of incoherent misery from her passionate little heart. Outraged, wretched, when she kneels down, she rises relieved and calmed. It is only an accented repetition of what she has endured before. It is her lot. Perhaps some day it will change. There are hearts in the village beating kindly for her. At least she will not take her scanty substance and run away until after the day at Fair Lake.

Faint for food, tired out with weeping, she sits down with her little stock of school books, and goes over them here and there to distract herself. There is not a novel in the house and she has exhausted the slender supply of history. The day must be gone through with. It certainly will not do to approach Miss Belden on the subject of the picnic this afternoon. Finally, in extremity the girl gets her writing materials and begins one of her periodical letters to Mary Bonner, who is the most misled young woman in existence if she accepts Miss Fayette's putting of facts as an unvarnished statement. Lenore tells as much of the truth as sounds cheerful and prosperous in these letters, and tells it very prettily. It amuses her to put on paper what would be so very pleasant if only there were no Aunt Deborah to make her life wretched. This time her story needs less embellishing than usual. The Misses Saltonstall and Gale figure largely and Dr. Lemist, trimmed down a few pounds in bulk, assumes the role of a beneficent fairy. Finally, having come to the end of her paper, Lenore leans her head against the casement and looks out on the "ancestral park" about which she has been writing. She remains thus in a waking dream until the ringing of a spiteful toned little bell summons her to the dining-room. Here, as usual the extreme end of the table is covered with a cloth, and in company with her relative she sits down in silence to the evening meal of bread and butter. She is nearly famished and devours slice after slice of the thin bread, even helping herself a second time to

butter, an act of daring nearly equal to the celebrated one of Oliver Twist.

"I had no dinner you know, Aunt Deborah," she says.

"Whose fault was that?"

Silence.

"The fault of your own evil temper which will yet get you into trouble, Niece Lenore, both in this world and in the next."

"I never knew that I was quick-tempered until I came here," says the girl in a low tone.

"Now that you do know it I advise you for your soul's good to try to govern it. I have been thinking, and I believe I have been, through foolish indulgence of spirit, remiss in my care of you."

Lenore looks up in unfeigned amazement. Wherein, by any system of investigation, can her aunt reproach herself with over-indulgence of her niece? Remiss in care. Oh yes. But surely Miss Belden does not see that.

"I have let you run too wild. Those lessons began it; but they are ended without interference from me, happily. Hereafter I shall keep you strictly at home, and take upon myself the cross of teaching you the work of the house. A cruel burden at my age, but gladly undertaken for the sake of Christ."

Lenore's eyes grow large and fearful. The precious day at Fair Lake! What shall she do? Speak now or wait until to-morrow? She decides that she cannot endure the suspense.

"I-I received a note from Miss Saltonstall this

afternoon," she says, timidly, drawing it slowly from her pocket and keeping her big, appealing eyes on her aunt's leathery face.

"If I presume to read it," asks the latter ironically, "will it drive you from the room in a tempest of tears? I warn you I am weary of your stagy outbursts."

"I wish you to read it, Aunt Deborah," says the girl with a leaden heart.

Miss Belden takes the note and slips it into her pocket. "I will do so, then, at my leisure. You, as a beginning, may put away these things and wash the dishes."

Lenore rises mechanically and obeys. Miss Belden accompanies her to the pantry with the bread and butter and watches the safe disposition of each. Then follows the important rite of washing the two plates and one cup and saucer. The right pan, the right place to set it, the right dish cloth, the right temperature of the water, above all the right quantity of soap to use, - these are a terrible list of details for Lenore, who would certainly laugh if she were not too utterly crushed by apprehension, at the way Miss Belden hangs over her, sighing, groaning, ordering, and commenting as the work proceeds. There is an extra twang in Miss Deborah's voice at devotions this evening, and truly awful are the denunciations she hurls at Lenore from the pages of her misused holy book. The prayer that follows is full of vindictiveness and sacrilege. The girl shrinks with an unspeakable repugnance from it all.

"I cannot stay here," she decides later, looking sol-

emnly out her window at the jeweled sky. All sorts of wild plans flit through her head. She would like Miss Gale to take her as a maid; but what sort of substitute would she be for the capable Mary? And before anything can be done she has to contrive to obtain from Miss Belden the money she was so foolish as to give into her hands when she came, and how can that be accomplished? Her aunt has yet to read Miss Saltonstall's letter and pronounce her doom for Thursday. Lenore's thoughts fly to that pleasant day longingly.

"One thing I could do," she thinks, the last thing before going to sleep, "while I have a little money to pay board with, I could live with Hepsy at her farm. She told me to call upon her when I needed to."

Of course her first waking thought the following day is of Miss Saltonstall's invitation. How to get possession of her little stock of money, how to escape from Elmdale—these speculations do not trouble her in the morning. She is all absorbed in her fate as to to-morrow. Miss Belden's face at the breakfast table is as uncommunicative as ever, and it is not until the ordeal of the dish-washing is accomplished that Lenore summons courage to approach the subject; then, her heart beating hard with hope and fear, she speaks, making an effort to keep all emotion out of her voice.

"Have you read Miss Saltonstall's note yet?"

Miss Belden gives a grunt of contempt. "Yes, I have. Here it is. I presume you will wish to keep it among your treasures."

"I suppose you have no objection to my going."

"I have a very decided objection."

Lenore grows pale with intense disappointment, but she controls herself excellently.

"It is a pitiful sight," continues Miss Belden, "to see a woman of Miss Saltonstall's age a mere pleasure seeker. No. As I said, you are about to turn over a new leaf. Miss Saltonstall must understand that though she has nothing to do with precious time but to fritter it away, your case is different."

"Aunt Deborah, if you will let me go to that one place, I will not ask for another day—not another hour!" Lenore knows her only chance lies in being composed, and composed she is, only her little fingers, parboiled from the hot water, are laced tightly together. Her face, grown thin since the first day she saw Alderley, holds something in its child-like appeal that is disconcerting to Miss Belden. She turns aside and pulls down a window before she answers; but then her lowered eyelids and uplifted chin are unyielding.

"You know I am not in the habit of changing my mind. I have neither the time nor the money, in the first place, to prepare the necessary luncheon for such a trip."

"I do not wish to carry any lunch, Aunt Deborah. I shall not be hungry."

"You not hungry! That would indeed be the eighth wonder of the world. At any rate, I could not allow you to put yourself in such a position."

"Then I will gladly buy some fruit and crackers to carry."

"What with?"

"A little of my own money, Aunt Deborah."

Miss Belden looks up now. Her wrinkled face seems kindled with an inward light. A faint smile plays over her lips, quickly banished as she again drops her glance.

"This seems a good time to tell you that you have not one cent in the world," she says slowly.

Lenore starts, and a hunted, frightened look comes into her eyes.

"How-how can that be?" she exclaims.

"Do you remember complaining and repining because of your scanty wardrobe? Have you forgotten that, yielding to your entreaties, I purchased a fine gown for you? What did you suppose paid for the red silk dress, Niece Lenore?"

The girl gasps like a trapped bird. The smooth, crafty tones betray their triumph in spite of themselves.

"You are a poor, vain, sinful girl, given to me to reclaim. Evils often run into their own punishments. Each time you look at that silk, it is to be hoped you will determine to conquer the sin of pride. Meanwhile be humble and obedient, as befits a dependent. You may go up to your chamber, Lenore."

Lenore walks across the room and vanishes like one in a dream. Perhaps Miss Belden suddenly determined to dismiss her because she could not bear the expression of face which was so vividly like that other young girl, of twenty years ago. At all events she can not complain this time that the still little figure takes her departure stagily, and yet no stage effect

could create on this old woman the impression that this colloquy has done. Even in her own familiar kitchen in broad daylight she casts uneasy glances over her shoulder, and is fain to prop up her well-drilled conscience by breaking into psalmody.

"Hark from the tombs, a doleful sound!"

The hymn follows Lenore up to her room, although she closes the door upon it. She stands in the middle of the floor, nerveless, hopeless. Even when she begins to cry it is not in her usual fashion. How it hurts her too. The wretched pain in her side is an exasperating addition to her misery; but it helps her to cease those long, pathetic, despairing sobs. When they are quite stilled, and her hand steady, she sits down and writes Miss Saltonstall a graceful and pleasant little note, declining her kind invitation with regrets, so polite that not a trace of the pangs with which they are written is to be detected.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## AN INVOLUNTARY JOURNEY.

A BOUT six o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, Dr. Lemist is seated at the desk in his office. An open book, a learned book, lies before him, and beside its heavy cover his elbow leans, as he supports his head on his hand. It is a studious attitude, calculated to deceive the casual observer; but a closer look reveals the fact that his eyes are not fixed upon the page. They are directed out to the dusty street, but one might search there in vain for an object sufficiently pleasing to create the charmed and rapt expression which pervades the doctor's face. Finally however some figure crosses his line of physical vision which recalls him from the indulgence of his fancy; a figure almost as remarkable to be seen on foot in Alderley as the doctor himself.

"I believe Hepsy is bringing me the dog," he reflects, changing his position and stretching.

On comes Miss Nash's tall figure, pauses at the doctor's gate and pushes it open. There she stands a minute, looking over her shoulder for her small companion, who, reveling in the irresponsibility of this pedestrian excursion, is inclined to loiter by the way.

Presently Ino rushes before her into the doctor's office.

"Good afternoon, Hepsy," says the latter in his hearty voice, when she appears in the door-way. Miss Nash's face is intensely solemn.

"Good afternoon," she replies shortly. "Got the box ready?"

"For the dog? Not yet. I did n't know when you would bring him."

"Can you get it ready for the seven o'clock express?"

Hepsy tries studiously to keep all enmity or resentment out of her voice. After all Dr. Lemist has only shown her her duty and performed his own.

"I don't see how I can. My office hour will not be over until seven. Leave him with me. I will see that he gets off safely to-morrow."

"Aint you goin' to that picnic to-morrow?"

"So I am."

"That dog's goin' to-night," remarks Hepsy.

"He could go without a box," says the doctor, looking at him musingly, "but it would cost a good deal more."

"Won't that there five dollar bill pay for it?" asks Hepsy, scorn and emotion struggling in her voice.

"You had a right to that and you ought to have kept it for your trouble," says the other, smiling.

"I have n't had no trouble," she returns.

"You could go to the carpenter there by the dépôt and have the box made. The distance is so short you won't need to put any food in."

"It's here," observes Hepsy, lifting a bag made of unbleached cotton, to the drawing string of which is attached a bright tin cup, evidently but just purchased. "I calc'lated to write, 'please give him a drink,' on this."

"That won't be necessary at all," replies the doctor, regarding her curiously. He is beginning to understand Miss Nash's real attitude in the affair. "You take the little fellow around there. I'll cut short my hour and be on hand in time to see to putting him on the train. Here," stepping to his desk and writing, "is a card with the address."

"I calc'late to see to puttin' him on the train myself. I calc'late to go with him as far as the junction."

"And walk back two miles? Where are your horse and wagon."

"I've put 'em up. What 's two miles!"

"There is not the slightest necessity for it," protests the doctor. "I do not know that you will be allowed in the baggage car."

"I don't calc'late to have anythin' put a top o' his box," remarks Hepsy, doggedly. "I'm goin'. Come along, Ino. Good day, doctor," and the couple take their departure.

The half hour which Hepsy spends seated on the step outside the carpenter's door is one to be remembered. Ino's light-hearted unconsciousness of his doom goes to her very heart. He races about, interviewing every passing dog, turning over stray, aged and dusty bones, barking at wagons and behaving generally with the interest in metropolitan sights and sounds observable in verdant visitors from the country.

Meanwhile the carpenter makes short work of the box.

"Make it open work, so's he can breathe," says Hepsy, thrusting her head in at the door, and suddenly withdrawing. The strokes of the hammer hurt her, still her nervous anxiety will not let her keep away.

"Are you sure them slats are far enough apart?" she questions again and again, and the carpenter is glad enough when the apparently insignificant, but really onerous, task is completed.

Poor Hepsy! It is a cruel moment for her when she must call Ino from his congenial employment of digging and barking into a promising hole that runs under the sidewalk, to lift him into the narrow quarters which he is to occupy temporarily.

The dog drops his tail and ears in a dejected manner at his imprisonment.

"Poor little feller, poor little feller,' twont be long," she says, tenderly, after having given him a long, deep drink of fresh water; then with sudden, savage change of tone she turns upon the carpenter. "Do you want to beat his brains out!" she demands, as the man carelessly hammers down the slats over the top.

Catching up the unwieldy burden in her strong arms she carries it across to the neighboring dépôt platform, sees the express agent, and then sits down quietly beside the prisoner to wait for the train.

"Now don't you look at me that way, Ino," she exclaims, her own eyes filling with tears as she meets the questioning look from behind the bars. "It's a pesky shame, but there! 'twont do any good to cry

about it. There's somethin' in here, if I remember rightly, that you like first rate," and Hepsy pulls open the bag. The short tail wags, even in durance vile, when the lunch comes in view, and when at last the engine and Dr. Lemist appear simultaneously from different directions, Miss Nash is still feeding the little traveler with the daintiest scraps she can find.

She persists in her plan of getting on the train, but is met rather brusquely when she insists upon seeing personally to the comfortable disposition of her pet.

"That'll be all right, ma'am, that'll be all right. There won't be any trouble. The company sees to that."

These and various kindred answers are all Hepsy gains by her persistence, and she finds herself standing undecidedly on the platform between two cars, while the train has gained its full speed.

"I may as well go inside," she reflects. "How long before we get to the junction?" she shouts to the nearest official, who happens to be a brakeman. "I want to get off there."

He looks her over. Evidently her costume is not intended for traveling.

"We don't stop at the junction any more. We only slow up."

"Land!" ejaculates Hepsy.

"You better go in," and the man opens the door behind her. "The conductor'll be along in a minute."

"But you've got to stop!" cries Hepsy.

The door closes upon her. She stands near it until the conductor appears, but to all her arguments he lends a deaf ear.

- "We can not stop under any circumstances before reaching Ireton," he repeats, decidedly.
  - "When's that?"
  - "Nine o'clock."
- "But I keep tellin' you there aint a soul on the farm that can feed the critters."
- "Very sorry, ma'am," says the conductor, smiling, but I don't believe *your* stock are likely to miss one meal much."

Hepsy appreciates the compliment and feels that it is not undeserved.

"Well, what train can I get home?"

"Why,—" the conductor frowns thoughtfully.
"There is an express comes through there at eleven that will stop at Alderley. You might telegraph that train to stop at Ireton and take you on. That's the best you can do."

With this Hepsy is fain to be content. She sighs. "Well," she says in her penetrating voice. "I presume you couldn't do more, only be sure them men in front there are careful o' that box." Then she begins looking about her for a seat. Nearly all are full; only one extraordinarily fleshy woman has one to herself. Hepsy steps up to her looking doubtfully for a little spare space.

"Do you take the whole of this seat, marm?"

The fat woman has been watching her colloquy with the conductor and now meets the questioning look good naturedly.

"Yes, and crowded at that," she replies wheezily; but here," leaning forward and lifting a valise which

has been sharing the next seat with a gentleman. "Sit down here," she finishes, and Hepsy thanking her obeys.

The fat woman still continues to watch her with absorbed interest. Presently she leans forward and offers a small, white paper bag.

"Flag root's dreadful comfortin'," she suggests in a sepulchral whisper.

Hepsy takes a piece with a brisk nod of thanks and chews it, meditatively.

The fat woman evidently endures unbearable pangs of curiosity.

Finally she again bends forward.

"It's dreadful dispiritin' travelin' with a corpse," she whispers, huskily.

Hepsy jumps. "Are you?" she inquires turning around.

"Oh no, not now, but I have," with a nod of sympathy and again proffering the sweet flag.

"No more marm, thank you."

The fat woman pushes her advantage. "How old was the corpse?" she asks confidentially.

" Marm?"

"Excuse my askin'. It aint mere curiosity. I heard you tellin' the conductor about the box. Oh, how sad them boxes do look!"

"Gracious, marm. It's a box with a dog in it!" exclaims Miss Nash, to the infinite diversion of the gentleman beside her. "A live dog at that!"

The fat woman gives a grunt of disgust and disappointment; and, when her interlocutor's back is

turned looks resentfully at the crown of Hepsy's hat, as though mentally charging her with having obtained the valise's place under false pretenses.

But Hepsy is not to occupy the seat long. The two hours slip away and the conductor comes to warn her that they are approaching Ireton.

She rises, and moving down the aisle, looks around to see if no one else gets off here; but not another passenger stirs. It is a cloudy evening and one cannot see an inch beyond the car windows. Whatever may be the beauties and attractions of Ireton they are utterly invisible, and no one seems inclined to investigate them save Hepsy herself, whose shrewd eyes are entirely useless at night. She moves cautiously out on the platform, is handed down the steps bidding Ino a last, silent farewell, and is still gazing helplessly about her for the dépôt which is to be her haven, when the whistle blows and the train moves off.

Finally she becomes aware of a man standing near, who with a look over his shoulder beckons her to accompany him. This colored individual, as he proves to be, wears a shirt of white flannel, and this spot of light Miss Nash follows more eagerly than ever mortal pursued Will-o-the-wisp. Across an eternity of rail-road tracks their path seems to lie, and Hepsy blindly plunges forward, now stubbing her toe, now slipping off a tie and wondering whether the distant lantern which appears before her can belong to the only station in this wretched place.

She very soon finds this to be the case. Her guide opens the door and ushers her into a narrow room, full

of men whose rough faces and laughter and free use of tobacco cause Miss Nash to shrink and hesitate about entering. She looks all about. There is not a woman to be seen. There is a rusty stove in the center of the room, but not a chair for her accommodation, even if she dared to settle down in such company. The loud laughter and talk ceases as the men catch sight of her, and she goes forward and accosts the one of the group who wears an official cap. He listens indifferently to her story and "guesses taint any use to try to get the eleven o'clock express to stop there."

At this juncture a young man enters the room. He has a dogged, stupid look, but at least he is too young to be a hardened smner. She turns to him appealingly, and when she discovers him to be the telegraph operator her hopes rise.

"I'll do what I can. I don't know. Guess it is n't much use," he returns, grudgingly, to her statement, going into the little enclosure railed off at one end of the room. Miss Nash prepares to remain as close as possible to the magical little machine which is to reveal her fate; but her official friend glances at her with disfavor. "Sam," he says, addressing the man whose white flannel vesture gains fairness from the ebony hue of his complexion, "Sam, you'd better take her to the house."

"The house!" The words have a sinister sound to Miss Nash's ear. She casts an appealing look at the telegraph operator. Evidently he is not by nature a knight errant. He takes very calmly female loveliness in distress.

"Look here, young man," she says to him, exasperated by this indifference. "Understand that it's your business to make that train stop here. I wish 1 knew how to click that thing!"

The operator smiles with a superior expression.

Sam catches up his lantern and swings it toward her as a broad hint; but Hepsy does not regard him.

She brings down her hand with a slap on the railing. "I want you to do your best, now. I've been run away with an' dumped down in this outlandish place entirely against my will — understand? I've left a little farm at home with cows, an' hens, an' pigs that haint had a thing to eat to-night — understand? I'm told there aint a reg'lar train from here till 3:30 in the mornin'. Well, now, I've got an engagement to-morrow to supply a lot o' picnic folks with victuals, an' I live a long piece from town an' have got to go up the mountain an' back again, an' I'd like a little sleep thrown in somewhere. Understand?"

The operator grins and nods. "That's all right," he says. "All I say is I don't believe they'll stop.

By this time Sam is swinging his lantern with reckless impatience. He longs to finish with Miss Nash and to return to the congenial group around the cold stove.

She follows him out of the building and through the thick darkness outside, the man's slouching stride carrying him so swiftly that oftentimes she is in danger of losing sight of her guiding star—i.e.—the white flannel shirt.

"If this aint the nightmare," she reflects, "it's a

good imitation. I wisht I could wake up an' find I'd been dreamin' like I used to years ago about Thanksgivin' time." Here a stumble brings her sharply down upon her knees. "I won't talk no more about dreamin' after this!" she mutters.

The last track is passed and the beacon light begins to rise into air. Miss Nash, by stubbing her toe against the lowest one of a flight of steps, discerns the means of following it, and begins to ascend, grateful for the rickety hand rail by which she can guide herself.

She is ushered into a lighted room where the air is heavy with — the wanderer thinks it is pickled cabbage. There is a short counter with cold biscuit and pieces of pie on one side, behind which sits a woman, rocking, and reading a newswaper. On the other side of the room by a window, sits a girl of about eighteen years, who stares with squinted eyes and open mouth at Hepsy as she enters, but seems immediately to forget her short-lived interest, and resumes her fretful moans, interspersed by, — "I wish I had some coffee. O, how I do wish I had a cup o' coffee. How dry I am! How dry I am!"

The woman behind the counter rocks and reads totally unmoved by moan or appeal. Miss Nash takes in the repulsiveness of the situation with sharpened faculties.

At home in Alderley, she is, to use her own expression, "on her own stampin' ground," but here, where she knows no one and nothing, not even the lay of the land about her, she feels a partial loss of her self-teliance.

"Wait!" she exclaims, desperately, turning to the door through which her guide has disappeared. Too well she knows what difficulties and obstacles will separate them in a minute more; but he is gone, and there is no sound but the monotonous squeak, squeak, of the rocker behind the counter and the querulous fretting of the half-witted girl.

"How dry I am. How dry I am. I do wish I had a cup o' coffee. I want a cup o' coffee so."

The dreary repetition distracts tender-hearted Hepsy. She goes up to the counter and addresses the woman in charge.

"Here is ten cents," she says, "if you will get that poor critter some coffee."

The newspaper is lowered. "Huh? O stuff and nonsense. She'd be yellin' for somethin' else if she had that. Shut up, Nance!"

Hepsy sinks down bewildered on an old settee. At intervals heavy freight trains come rumbling by, shaking the building, and sometimes pausing to let a crowd of rough, jovial fellows attack the viands on the counter, when Miss Nash shrinks into the darkest corner she can find, and shuts her ears to their coarse jokes. It seems an age before the door opens and Sam's woolly head appears.

She starts to her feet. "Is it time? Let us make haste. It's clever of 'em to stop!"—she exclaims incoherently, rushing toward him.

He rolls his eyes at her and winks slowly.

"That there express won't stop," he says, deliberately.

"Won't!" gasps Miss Nash. "Tell me then-" But Sam has nothing more to say and has no idea of repeating himself. He turns coolly and disappears. Hepsy retreats again to her remote window, if any portion of the stuffy room can be called remote, and falls a prey to despair. Again she consults the clock Ten minutes of eleven. In ten minutes, only ten little minutes she ought to be free from this chamber of horrors. She determines to watch for the express. It will be a mournful pleasure to see it glide through the abyss of darkness. It is on time too - this unaccommodating train. Hepsy hears it whistle, sees its brilliant head-light and then its length of coaches, each one a luxurious haven of rest to her strained, tired eyes. She can see through the broad, welllighted windows of some of the cars, forms of people passing to and fro. How intensely she envies them! She clasps her hands on the dingy window seat, and gazes with sensations presumably akin to those of the Peri outside the gates of Paradise.

But what is that she sees. Surely she must be the victim of some optical illusion. No, it is an actual fact. The express train, that light, pleasant, safe, traveling parlor does stop, and for her! She stares, throws up her hands, rushes for the door—and by the time she gets there the train is in motion again.

Poor Miss Nash. She feels desperate as she sinks down upon the bench. Four hours more in this place. It might as well be four years. Nance is now singing her appeal for coffee. The woman behind the counter has dropped her newspaper and is bringing out new

supplies of bread and meat evidently in expectation of another onslaught from hungry train men and Hepsy finally relaxes the strain, and leaning her head against the wall falls into a light doze. How long this has lasted she cannot reckon, when an earpiercing yell from the foolish girl wakes her.

"Shut up Nance," she hears her other companion cry, angrily, and the repugnance with which she again recognizes her surroundings is not lessened by an excessively sickening odor which fills the room.

"See the sheep! See the sheep!" cries Nance eagerly, her voice audible above the rumbling of a long train which is slackening beside the house.

Hepsy shrinks as far away into the darkness as she can get. A crowd gathers outside and the noise increases. There seems to have been an accident of some sort and the sheep add their voices to the confusion. The stench is unbearable. Miss Nash shuts her eyes and prays to faint away. After waiting a moment for improbable unconsciousness, she opens them wide again, and now she has something to open them for.

A man has just entered the room of a totally different stamp from those she has been encountering. He wears a light summer overcoat and is otherwise fashionably dressed. He is peering about with a pair of near-sighted eyes and muttering to himself.

"What was Lemist about, I should like to know—sending Orpheus into the infernal regions for a Rarydice who is n't here at all."

"Mr. Burley!" exclaims Hepsy, in accents of incredulous delight. "Be you an angel!"

"You flatter me," observes that personage. "If I am, I am singularly out of place here."

"I don't know what time it is, nor hardly who I am," continues Hepsy wildly, "but let's get out o' this. We can't do no worse."

"Agreed," replies the other, submitting to have his arm clasped by his frenzied companion, who hurries him to the farther door and down the steps.

"I can't see the first thing," she observes in explanation as she stumbles down these, giving her escort occasion for all his muscle in the endeavor to preserve her in something resembling an upright position.

"In that case, perhaps slow and sure had better be our motto," he returns, gravely, "for I solemnly assure you that I am blinder than the blindest bat that ever flew. Would that I had his wings!" the fervent addition being called forth by Miss Nash's stumbling against the first of the railroad tracks. The freight train is far enough along to give them an opportunity to cross behind it.

"Such a night as this has been!" exclaims Hepsy, breathlessly, hurrying her companion over the iron sea, the topography of which is as much a mystery to her now as when she first crossed it. "How can I ever be thankful enough to you for appearin' just when I thought my hair'd turn white if I had to stand it another minute."

"Don't mention it," returns Alan, resigning himself to the hit or miss mode of locomotion which Miss Nash apparently prefers, and allowing his arm to become a pivot upon which she swings and pitches and tosses at the mercy of the tracks and ties. "I found Dr. Lemist at the station at Alderley at one o'clock, tearing his hair because you had not arrived.

"Well! What in the world was you and him doin' at that depot at one o'clock in the mornin'?"

"Waiting for you, of course."

Hepsy laughs good humoredly. "A likely story. I'm too old a bird to be caught with that chaff."

"Honestly, that was Dr. Lemist's errand. He told me that you started off for the junction with the dog, and that he thought—" but here the speaker arrests himself. It will never do to tell this self-contained woman that her grief has been so evident as to make the doctor uneasy, and in a half-amused way remorseful for his own part in the separation. "It seems he drove to the junction to meet you, and as the train did not stop, took pains to learn what you could do next, and finding that you could get off here and possibly get the train back to Alderley at one, he was there to meet you. As for me, I could n't sleep; an old complaint of mine, returned, perhaps, for the occasion, and I left the house and strolled down to the depot. I told the doctor that I had the night on my hands and would as lieve as not make a trip to Ireton if it would be any relief to his mind, so-here I am."

"That's a pity, you can't sleep," muses Hepsy, her practical mind grasping that fact with greater facility than it can acknowledge the service to herself. "What's Dr. Lemist for if he can't make you sleep?"

"O, that will be all right; this is the first night that I've prowled in some time."

"I want to find somebody here to blow up," says Miss Nash, as they reach the station.

"They have all gone to the other entertainment," remarks her escort, looking into the empty room. "What's your grievance?"

"Humph!" returns Hepsy. "What aint it! but the principle thing is that they told me after tel'graphin' that the express train would n't stop for me, an' it did, right afore my face an' eyes, while I was over there in that den."

"That is strange."

"The conductor I come up with thought it would, too."

"Ah. Then you may be sure he had something to do with it. There is our head-light now. I dare say you were never before so glad to see one."

They enter the rather comfortless car and take their places. Hepsy looks with motherly solicitude at the handsome face beside her. "A nice lookin' pair we shall be at that picnic to-morrow," she remarks. "F' the land's sake, don't let on anythin' about the sufferin's o' this night. Are you sure you could n't ha' slept anyhow?"

"Quite. Be easy on that point."

"Well, I'm sleepy enough for all I must ha' got a good many winks there in that place o' torment."

Perhaps the speaker's drowsy sphere affects her neighbor. Perhaps in tugging Miss Nash's one hundred and forty pounds across those railroad tracks he has found the antidote to his insomnia. At all events his eyelids begin slowly to droop, his chin sinks on his

chest, and without in the least anticipating it, the

young man drops asleep.

Hepsy regards him with high satisfaction, and when his hat, set forward to shade his eyes, threatens to topple on to his nose and awake him, she stealthily lifts it into position. He sleeps until within ten minutes of the time for reaching Alderley, and wakens then to find that it is light, and that Miss Nash's shrewd, alert gaze is fixed unwinkingly upon him.

"I—why—thank heaven, I've been asleep—I mean, beg pardon, Miss Nash, and you have n't even dozed. It's too bad of me, I declare."

"Fiddlesticks. It's the best thing that could happen to you," replies Hepsy, briskly. "Now, I'm beholden to you more'n I can say," she adds, when they are standing on the home platform, but I'm kinder 'shamed o' myself, too, take it all 'round, an' if you'll keep mum on the subject o' this night's work I'll take it kinder yet."

Mr. Burley laughs a little. "Your will is law," then moving away and lifting his hat, "I will see you later."

"Take care it don't crop out that you seen me earlier, that's all."

"Silence a la mort!" responds the young man, dramatically, and Hepsy departs to get Tim and the wagon.

## CHAPTER XX.

## FAIR LAKE.

THIS shining morning seems made to order for the excursionists to Fair Lake. The dancing sunbeams, the cooling zephyrs, are so many added pangs to Lenore's grief. She cannot eat her breakfast. A swelling in her throat makes it impossible to swallow. Even Miss Belden notices the rings around her eyes. She regards her with musing contempt.

"Can it be possible," she says incisively, "that a great girl like you, nineteen years old her next birthday will go moping about trying to make herself ill because she cannot go to a picnic?" then as Lenore does not answer by word or look, "Oh, no," she continues, "the excursion alone would not tempt you to such an extent. Probably the truth is that you have found a kindred spirit in that idle fellow at the Saltonstalls. Doubtless you had planned to use this day to follow him up."

Lenore rises and pushes her chair back with a single movement. She looks tall in her indignation.

"For shame, Aunt Deborah!" she exclaims in a low voice.

"No theatricals if you please."

"You judge others by yourself, perhaps. Whoever it is that disappointed you he little knows what an

escape he made;" and turning, the girl leaves the room, the untasted breakfast, the unwashed dishes, the house itself.

Fifteen minutes afterward a buggy and pair of horses turn into the gates of Elmdale, and pass up the grass-grown driveway, pausing at the house.

A gentleman dismounts and rings the door bell. Miss Belden answers the call, assuming her smoothest manner as she sees the new-comer.

"You are quite a stranger, Dr. Lemist. Walk in," she says.

"Upon which you are to be congratulated, of course," he replies with his broad smile accompanied by a lift at the corners of the mouth which lends a strong effect of humor to his hearty expression. "Miss Saltonstall tells me that your niece has sent regrets for to-day without offering any excuse. I came to see if you will not urge her to reverse her decision."

They are standing in the hall, Dr. Lemist hat in hand looking steadily into the other's face.

"I don't think she ought to go," is the stiff reply. "She is not well—she did not eat a mouthful of breakfast this morning."

"May I see her?" asks the doctor courteously but with an air of determination which Miss Belden feels is equal to her own.

"Certainly you might if she were at home," she replies with a fleeting smile.

"But she is not?"

"But she is not."

Dr. Lemist sees the lurking devil in his hostess' eyes, and hears it in the voice which she tries unsuccessfully to render calm. He understands her very well.

With a silent bow he takes his leave. "That poor little girl!" he thinks as he mounts into the buggy.

He walks his horses slowly down the drive, looking sharply to the right and to the left. His scrutiny is rewarded by a bit of white stuff which he sees through the shrubbery. Driving the horses outside the gate he fastens them, then walks back toward the the streak of white, which, as he passes the old greenhouse, enlarges until it becomes a plain white dress gathered upon a yoke and not even belted around the wearer's waist. Lenore is stretched upon the ground, her face buried in her hands and her childish gown hanging limply around her to the ankles of her slippered feet.

Dr. Lemist, longing to take her bodily in his arms, stoops beside her.

She looks up at him, at first dully, then with excitement.

- "Dr. Lemist! You are going?"
- "Not without you."
- "What, will you take me? Does Aunt Deborah know?" she asks eagerly, not minding the fact that he has taken both her hands and even tightening her hold upon his fingers.
- "I came to take you with me, but Miss Belden says you are not well. Your hands do feel hot."
  - "Certainly I am not well. I have made myself ik

with disappointment; but if you will take me I shall be well at once. Ah!" and Lenore pulls her hands away to press them to her side.

"What is that, Miss Lenore?" professional interest and a warmer sentiment striving together in the speaker's frank face.

"A—a stitch, Aunt Deborah calls it," replies Lenore with a bright smile. "It is gone now."

"I wish you would answer a few questions," the doctor says anxiously.

"I will, provided you ask me what I mean to wear and how long it will take to put it on," replies Lenore with dancing eyes. "It is a buff cambric, wonderfully becoming, and it will only take me ten minutes to dress. Then we will start. If I do not come then and meet you here, come after me, will you? I shall need you," and Dr. Lemist is able only to gaze and acquiesce, as the fairy creature dances away.

In hardly more than ten minutes she reappears, the effect of the buff costume justifying her prediction. She spreads it out consciously for his approval.

"Is it not very nice?" she asks, "only for this everlasting hat. Is it not the ugliest — ugliest hat?"

"No. I really think it is the prettiest hat I ever saw," replies the doctor, sincerely.

"Ah, if you were a young man you would not think so," says Lenore, planting the unconscious stab with the brightest of smiles, "but to reward you for your goodness I am going to give you the highest mark of my favor—a geranium," and suiting the action to the

word she pins the flower in his button hole, the brim of the obnoxious hat industriously scratching his throat meanwhile.

"There, it is very becoming, and you are the first gentleman to whom I ever gave one."

"You do not give your flowers to young men then," the doctor remarks, his voice as kind as ever.

"I do not know any," is the prompt reply, "except Mr. Burley—and will you believe it—" her cheeks reddening with indignation at the remembrance—"my aunt accused me this morning of being in love with him."

"And you are not?" asks her companion calmly but with a thrill of delight.

"No,—although when he sings I feel that I would willingly do anything for him," admits Lenore while fixing a superb bunch of scarlet blossoms against the corn color of her dress.

"Except marry him."

"Why I never thought of that," says the girl impatiently, "or of marrying anyone until this morning when Aunt Deborah said that, in addition to many other disagreeable things. Then I rushed out here; and shall I tell you what I thought?"

Dr. Lemist is watching her face gravely and closely.

"I thought," she continues with slow impressiveness, that I would marry the very first man who asked me."

"Do you still feel so?"

"Ah, no," replies Lenore with a gay shrug, "I would not marry now until after the picnic even if a

prince should come for me. Oh! Oh!" she continues solemnly. "Have you brought anything to eat?"

"To eat?"

"Yes. Luncheon. They are all going to bring something, and Aunt Deborah would not let me have a thing," says Lenore in her sweet, childish voice as they walk together out of the grounds.

"Certainly that must be attended to," replies the doctor, entering into her seriousness. "I am glad you reminded me. Now what would be the correct thing?"

They have reached the buggy and there is no carriage step. Without speaking he lifts the slight, precious burden to its place. Seating himself beside her, he starts the horses.

"Is not this perfect!" exclaims his companion, delightedly, as the perfumed, bright air rushes past them.

" Perfect," he echoes.

"We are running away—eloping," she says, leaning forward, laughingly, and looking up into his face. "No—I do not mean that," she adds, with a slight shiver, "My precious mother did that and it was her death. I do not want this to be my death. But about the luncheon; do you think crackers with ham would do instead of bread and butter, for we cannot get that."

"Capitally."

"And lady-fingers; those are nice," continues Lenore, with calm consideration. "Then---can I say anything I want?" "Anything and everything."

"Then I say, decidedly, bananas for one thing."

"Here we are at the stores," remarks Dr. Lemist. "Shall I get out and make our purchases, or will you?"

"I would rather," remarks Lenore, eagerly, "I dearly love to spend money."

The doctor jumps down and helps her out, only touching her hand in this instance.

"You have carte blanche," he says, with a smile, as he hands her his pocket-book.

"It feels thick," announces Lenore, taking the purse

and squeezing it approvingly.

"If there is not enough there my credit is good," replies her companion, and she nods and disappears within a store. He sits in the buggy waiting for her, and follows her with his eyes as she flits out of one door into another, until she has arranged everything to her satisfaction. Then the brown paper bags are stowed away, the purse returned, and they start again.

"Did you find everything you wanted?"

"Yes, only that silly grocer, when I asked for the ham, pretended at first not to know what I meant," says Lenore, with a bewitching pout. "Devilish ham, I said, just as plain as that."

"Deviled ham, it is," remarks the doctor, the cor-

ners of his mouth twitching up.

"Well, is that not the same thing? I tasted some once. Bah—it burned me. I can not bear it. I bought it for you. You can have it all," she finishes, magnanimously.

"Your aunt said you had no breakfast. Won't you eat a lady-finger now as we go along?"

"Yes, if you will," picking up the bag and unfolding the top.

"But I have had a good beefsteak this morning."

"That does not matter. It makes me wretched to eat alone!"

"And both my hands are occupied. That off horse feels pretty gay to-day, you see."

"But I shall feed you," replies Lenore.

"I never eat cake," remarks the doctor, but his feeble protestation is of no avail.

"You ought to, for it is nice," responds his companion, concisely, so Dr. Lemist is fain meekly to eat the sponge cake presented to his lips, while Lenore nibbles hers down like a hungry squirrel, chattering between the bites.

As they drive along, the houses grow more straggling, until near the head of the lake only a few shanties are to be seen, and upon each of these is a shingle bearing the legend, "Boats to Let." One bank of the little lake is bordered with forest trees, but these can not be reflected to-day in the ruffled water whose waves are here and there fringed with foam which forms and then melts quickly into the blue. It is a spot which needs only to be stamped fashionable in order to be swarming with cottages, summer hotels, and camping parties.

A few feet back from the shore a tent is placed, open in front toward the water, and beside it, conversing with some one within, stands Miss Saltonstall. At sight of the doctor and his companion, she comes deliberately to meet them, smiling graciously at Lenore.

"So the brave knight carried off the lady fair," she says, kindly.

"Yes, was it not good of him?" responds Lenore, shaking her draperies.

"I found she did n't need to be carried off," remarks Dr. Lemist.

"Why, yes I did," says Lenore, opening her eyes.
"Did you think my aunt knew that I came?"

"Certainly, I supposed—" begins the doctor, when the girl interrupts him with a light shake of the head.

"No, indeed. She knows nothing. I crept off."

"Why, Miss Fayette, will she not be worried? What will she think?"

"I have no idea. You should have thought of that before," she replies, saucily.

Miss Saltonstall regards her with cold surprise. "I fear you have been very indiscreet, Miss Fayette," she says, "Dr. Lemist may be subjected to decided annoyance through this. Your aunt—"

"She will not dare say a word!" exclaims Lenore, her cheeks reddening, as she lays her hand on the doctor's coat sleeve. "It was entirely my act, and I am glad I came, not sorry. Ah, the beautiful water! I must get to it," and the volatile creature runs away leaving the doctor and Miss Saltonstall looking at one another.

The gentleman speaks first:

"Do not criticize her, Miss Rachel. Such as she are not made to be criticized."

"To be admired, perhaps," suggests Rachel, noting the color in his face that rose there at Lenore's touch "Not even that. They ought simply to be loved."

"I have always found your advice worth following," replies Miss Saltonstall, with a smile. "Join us when you have put up the horses;" and she walks away.

Miss Fortune sees Lenore coming and hurries to meet her.

"Oh, Miss Lenore, how glad I am to see you," she ejaculates, her eyes moist. "It seems so long. You don't blame me, do you? I felt awfully when ma told me she'd written you that letter, and I was so afraid you would n't come to-day and I could n't tell you."

"But you see I did," rejoins Lenore, gaily. "Do not feel badly, Miss Fortune. It is a sin on such a day, in such a place. Who is in the tent?"

"Mrs. Saltonstall," replies the other; and the two girls go inside where that lady is rocking comfortably in a chair brought for her benefit. A handsome afghan stripe lies across her lap and she alternately works upon it and looks out across the water. She leans forward and shakes hands kindly with Lenore.

"Where is Miss Gale?" asks the latter.

"Straying about somewhere. Go and find her if you like, both of you. I don't need you now, Miss Fortune, thank you."

The young ladies are leaving the tent when they perceive a horseman approaching. It is Mr. Burley. He stops to speak to Rachel, and takes off his hat to Lenore and Miss Fortune, no trace in his fresh appearance of his vigils of the night before.

"We were four in the carriage without him," murmurs Miss Fortune, admiringly. "He had to ride."

- "And was probably very glad of it," adds Lenore.
  "Is his engagement to his cousin announced?"
- "No," replies Miss Fortune, with evident resentment. "She has a rival."
  - "Who? Miss Gale?"
  - "Yes."
- "I would not worry about that. You know, Miss Fortune, that you romance a little. It is natural that Miss Saltonstall should love her cousin. It is not, therefore, necessary that she should wish to marry him."
- "I hope not," rejoins Miss Fortune, fervently, "for I do believe that she never will."

## CHAPTER XXI.

## LOVE AND LOSS.

THE first thing Mr. Burley does after having disposed of his horse, is dutifully to make a call at the tent where he finds his aunt alone.

"Ah, you found us," she says, looking up placidly. "Sit down here on this stool. I brought it for Miss Fortune to use while she was helping me; but I find myself growing independent of her."

"Getting to be quite a performer on the knitting needle, are you?" remarks Alan, seating himself.

"Yes, indeed. Where is Rachel?"

"Looking out anxiously for Hepsy."

"Has n't she come yet? Why, I'm growing quite faint."

"I should think we all might take the edge off our appetites with the contents of that hamper that I saw leaving the house with you. Where are the rest of our party?"

"I saw the three young ladies walking by, a few minutes ago; but they have disappeared. How pale that little French girl is looking. If I were her aunt I think I should be quite concerned about her."

"Miss Gale is not looking ill to-day," remarks Mr. Burley with a smile, idly handling the gay stripe.

Mrs. Saltonstall looks at him with a side glance.

"Alan," she says, then, applying herself closely to her work. "I have been wanting to talk to you about Doris."

"I am willing you should to any extent."

Mrs. Saltonstall drops her hands and looks at him in dismay. "Don't tell me that you are in love with her already!"

"Very well, I won't, Aunt Catherine."

"My dear boy, do not jest on this subject."

"Nothing is farther from my intention."

"It would be very natural," continues Mrs. Saltonstall, "for you to fall in love with her. There was a moment when I hoped, when I thought, that you were intended for one another; but I found it was not to be hoped for nor thought of, and I did think I should be in time to rescue you from unhappiness."

Mr. Burley puts one hand over the idle ones in her lap.

"I am not unhappy, Aunt Catherine."

"Then you ought to be," she replies. "Doris Gale is, or has been, in love with some one else. She will never marry. She says it sincerely, and it is true-Do believe it, Alan," she adds piteously.

"I do believe it."

Mrs. Saltonstall stares. "Then you do not love her. Heaven be praised," she says, devoutly. "Rachel was sure you did not."

Mr. Burley smiles slightly under his moustache.

"Say it. Only say it once to me, dear, and I shall be infinitely relieved."

"Do not give another thought to it, Aunt Catherine

You will see that you need not when I tell you seriously that I myself shall never marry."

Mrs. Saltonstall straightens up in her chair and looks at him with a comical mixture of exasperation and perplexity.

"That is perfect nonsense!" she exclaims, at last.
"Tell me your reasons this minute for making up your mind to such a thing. It would disappoint me very much. It is not respectable."

"One's reasons for such a decision are usually very delicate, Aunt Catherine."

Mr. Burley's tone is cold water upon Mrs. Saltonstall's fire.

"Very well, Alan," she returns, taking refuge in one or two tears which spring without much assistance. "You have made me very unhappy. My dear boy, you are all the son I have, can it be possible that there is a woman who has—"

"Let us drop the subject for the present," he interrupts hastily. "Some time I hope to tell you all about it. It would be impossible, now. Indulge me once more Aunt Catherine. It won't be difficult, you are so in the habit."

Mrs. Saltonstall wipes her eyes in an injured silence, and Rachel appears in the doorway.

"Hepsy has come," she says. "Now you need not remain hungry much longer. There comes Dr. Lemist with the girls now."

Mr. Burley rises and seeks the scene of the luncheon table where he amuses himself with Hepsy's efforts to appear as if they had no secret understanding. Lenore comes forward with offers of assistance.

"How do you do, dearie?" says Hepsy affectionately, stopping to put her arm around the girl and gazing with loving solicitude into her face. She shakes her head with a troubled look as she releases her.

"No, you can't do nothin', it's all done. I'm just goin' to open the ham, an' it's poor stuff, not fit for anybody to eat that has n't got a cast iron throat; at least that's my opinion. Deviled ham indeed! It's mostly devil; there's very little ham about it," and with this gloomy reflection, Hepsy turns the mixture out upon a dish, and the company are summoned.

Mrs. Saltonstall advances to the improvised table, leaning on Dr. Lemist's arm, and followed by Miss Fortune bearing the folded rocker.

Hepsy proves herself a prompt and efficient waitress. Not a sign of ill in Lenore's face has escaped her, and her uneasy glances are supplemented by an offer of every delicacy on the table to the girl's acceptance. It is a talkative, gay party, but when it disperses Hepsy pulls the doctor's coat sleeve.

"It aint very often I get a chance o' complainin' to you, Dr. Lemist," she says in a loud tone, "Can you spare me about two minutes. The neurology has laid hold of me evenin's, lately, and —come out o' hearin'," she adds in a stage whisper.

When they are separated by several rods from the others of the company, the woman continues, a moisture springing to her eyes:

"Dr. Lemist, how are we goin' to save that Fayette girl's life?"

The man starts at the sharp question.

"Are you a doctor and not able to see that the child is downright sick — or ought to be?

"I was afraid of it, but it seemed to me that the medicine of a little change and a few happy hours might do more for her than anything else."

"Perhaps so. Perhaps; but do you know what is the matter with Lenore Fayette this minute?"

"Not precisely."

"I do," returns Hepsy, sharply. "She's starvin'!" The doctor looks shocked.

"You may say that she has n't any appetite. Of course not. I've read somewheres in a doctor's book that folks that eat too little, their stomachs contracts - shrinks, I take it, so's they can't eat an' don't want to eat enough. I calc'late the old story of the Irishman who tried to learn his horse to live without eatin', an' failed only because the critter went and died just as he'd got him down to one straw-I calc'late that 's bein' carried out in our midst. I know what I'm talkin' about. I know, an' doctor," here Hepsy's tears gather and fall, unheeded, "I love that pretty little thing. I think of her nights an' I worry over her. She's the most helpless, bright little mortal that ever run into a decline an' said nothin' about it;" and stolid Miss Nash, finding herself sobbing, runs away from her horrified listener, who turns, half stunned, to look for the young girl upon whom the whole strength of his mature affections is set. He hurries toward the pale yellow dress, and finds the wearer of it in animated converse with Miss Fortune.

"Dr. Lemist, I was just wishing for you. You will take us rowing, will you not?" she bursts forth, unheeding the anxious look in his face.

"I'm sure you are not well, Miss Lenore, "responds the doctor, looking at her feverish lips. "I wish you would let me take you home."

"Home!" Lenore nearly screams the ejaculation.

"Go home and be scolded before I have had all the day's pleasure? Why did you bring me?" she asks, pouting. "Ah, I wish to go on the water so much."

"Very well, I shall take you rowing, Miss Lenore," he returns hurriedly, "and then, much as I regret to make myself disagreeable, I shall take you home."

Lenore squeezes Miss Fortune's arm in token of triumph, and follows the doctor to where several boats are moored. Beside these Alan and Miss Gale are standing.

"You are about to try one of these clumsy craft, are you, doctor?" asks Mr. Burley. "I am exhausting all my powers of persuasion in order to induce Miss Gale to go out with me."

"Just see," Lenore says in an injured tone. "You invite Miss Gale, but I had to invite Dr. Lemist myself. How can you resist, Miss Doris, the water looks so inviting!"

Dr. Lemist in silent gravity is accepting a pair of oars, handed to him by a grimy-faced boy who has brought them from the nearest cottage. He enters the boat and reaches out his hand for Miss Fortune, who steps heavily in, squeals as the boat glides under her, and sways wildly for a moment, until she drops

with a thud into the seat. Then the doctor turns to Lenore. She stands within two feet of him, but with her hands crossed behind her, while she gazes at him with a comical, deprecating expression.

"If you do not stop looking so savage I shall think you are going to take me out into the middle of the lake and drown me," she says.

The doctor drops his outstretched hands. "Aren't you coming?" he asks.

Lenore's eyes fill with evident tears. "Not if you

are going to be so unkind," she replies.

"Heavens!" exclaims her worried escort. do vou want me to sav or do?"

"It hurts me terribly to cry, but I am afraid I shall if you do not behave as though you were having a good time. I thought you wanted to come to the picnic, and now you act as though you were in misery."

"Pray come, Miss Lenore, I am most anxious to go," says the doctor, endeavoring to look cheerful and again offering his hand.

"Now you are nice again," asserts Lenore, smiling upon him, and clasping his hand as she drops airily down into the boat.

The doctor can scarcely repress a groan at the touch of the hot fingers, and he bends to his oars as though determined to make the best time ever accomplished on that sheet of water.

The above exchange of words has been inaudible to Alan and Doris, but the coquettish pantomime elicits a smile from each.

"La Fayette evidently insisted upon being coaxed.

after all," says Burley. "I have no doubt she is an able little general."

"All women like to be coaxed, I think," says Doris, musingly, looking after the receding boat.

Alan turns to her with a decided brightening of the face. "After that admission, Miss Gale, you can not expect me to give up until you consent to go out with me."

The girl gives him a very frank, gay glance as she replies, "I will go. Do not humiliate me by a word of urging."

So the grimy-faced boy makes one more pilgrimage to the house for oars, and another of the boats sets out, bearing an unreasonably happy pair over the choppy waves. It is impelled to something like swiftness by the muscular strokes of Mr. Burley's skilled arms.

"Were we not thoughtless to come without Rachel?" asks Doris, with a sudden qualm of conscience.

"She is afraid of the water," is the careless reply.

"You row well," is the girl's next irrelevant remark, lazily watching the tiny whirlpools scudding before the oars.

"I used to go in for that sort of thing; but Miss Gale," here he drops the oars, whereupon they glide through the row-locks. He only grasps one in time, the other is rocking away over the water. Promptly, and with considerable effort, he sculls the boat after it and pulls it and its mate inside.

"I forgot they were not leathered," he remarks. "I started to say that you do not look comfortable. The

boat is dry. Sit right down in the bottom and then you can lean back."

This Doris accomplishes, but does not look overpleased with the arrangement.

"The sharp edge of the seat hurts your back, I see. It is warm work rowing an ark with a pair of posts. If you will let me take my coat off I shall be vastly more comfortable, and then you can have it to lean against."

"I never refuse a good offer," replies the girl, and Alan takes his coat off and tosses it to her. It would certainly not be straining a point of gallantry if he should cross to her end of the boat and arrange it for her himself. Nevertheless she likes the action. It gives her an added sense of safe good-comradeship.

She catches the garment and gives it a sharp shake preparatory to folding it, when, before her horrified eyes a gold ring leaps from a side pocket and sinks beneath the waves. She grasps desperately after it, nearly capsizing the boat, which for a moment rocks wildly. She gazes helplessly into her companion's face. Its pallor and the strange expression in his eyes fill her with chill dismay. This man has had his romance. What memento is this that she has destroyed? Perhaps the most sacred token of a dead love.

"What shall I do!" she murmurs, not wringing her hands, Doris' rare gift of repose never deserts her, but her pale lips and frightened eyes evidence her emotion.

"You were not in the least to blame," says Alan, smiling into the startled face.

"Can we not take the bearings of this spot and get some one to dive for it?" asks Doris, sadly and timidly, her arms dropped upon the coat in her lap.

"No, Miss Gale. I beg you not to mourn over the loss. You have only summarily ended a useless piece of sentiment, after all."

Doris lifts her sad eyes to his. The expression in their depths moves Alan's very heart.

"Perhaps you yourself have in the course of your life clung to a bit of romance longer than your common sense justified," he adds, lightly, for the purpose of consoling her.

"I have never had a romance," Doris answers, solemnly.

Burley surveys her drooping figure. Where, he wonders, could a fitter subject be found, and in the light of the little he knows of her past, how can he believe her? But he does believe her. His submission to that proud, pathetic face is complete.

"That is a great thing to say; a very beautiful thing to say," he remarks, forgetting to row and letting the boat drift.

She looks at him questioningly.

"Do you not see? I mean that you have the whole of yourself to give when the right time comes," adds Alan, earnestly. "You have not frittered away your affection. The whole, glorious treasure is there, waiting for the man who can claim it."

He strides across an intervening seat as he finishes, and places himself in front of her.

Doris hardly notices the action. She is struggling

against the depression that is again stealing over her. She gropes amidst its darkness for Rachel's strong, cheering words.

"Your husband should be a thrice happy man," adds Alan, catching her eyes. His fervor is lost upon her. She returns his look with an abstracted air.

"You ought to put on your coat if you are not going to row," she says. In another woman such a reply at such a time would be coquetry. Burley feels that in this case it is sheer preoccupation.

"No," he says, rather bitterly, "I believe you could not easily become sentimental. You have too cold a nature."

Doris looks up with returning spirit. "You show yourself a poor student of human nature, Mr. Burley. The most sentimental people are nearly always the most cold-hearted. Remember that, hereafter, and you will soon convince yourself of the truth of the assertion."

He studies her face unconsciously. At last he speaks. "You have never loved. You love no one now. That makes it all clear."

"I do not see what interest the discovery can have for you," Doris says, speaking with wonderful coolness, considering the beating of her heart.

Mr. Burley apparently shakes himself together mentally. "Even you should be moved to a degree of sentimentality just now, Miss Gale," he says, smiling, and speaking in a different voice. "People always are, in boats. Have you not noticed it?"

"Not under these circumstances," replies Doris,

looking off, "not on a bright early afternoon with a fresh breeze blowing."

"Yes, I must insist upon it. I think I never took a young lady out before who did not begin to hum before she had left the shore three rods behind us."

"It is gratifying to be found unusual," remarks Doris, "but I don't know just what you mean. If you should sing now would it be a sentimental performance?"

"Decidedly," responds Alan with disconcerting promptness and emphasis.

"I am very uncomfortable," says Doris, protecting herself, woman-like, by putting him in the wrong.

"Of course you are!" he exclaims remorsefully. "Why have I not been arranging this coat for you?" and as he speaks he folds it at her back with exceeding care.

"I will keep it only on condition that you will go back and row. It is going to rain, do you see?"

Mr. Burley does see, and as they are far from shore, he resumes his place and pulls at the oars so lustily that the boat reaches the landing before the shower descends.

The transit has been accomplished in silence, giving Doris plenty of time to think remorsefully, as she watches the smooth wake left by the boat, of the shining ring and its possible story.

As Alan helps her to land, she leaves her hand in his as she speaks impulsively:

"I feel as though I had said very little of my regret at losing your ring."

His hand closes on hers.

- "It was not my ring."
- "Ah, that makes it worse," sighs Doris, "I feared it was not. What a careless creature I was!"
- "Do you know what I would rather have than the ring?" he asks in a low tone, as Grimy-face is gathering up the oars and throwing them with a clatter upon the shore.
- "O, tell me. Something I can give you?" Doris speaks with eager unconsciousness. Her experience has not been such as to make her ready to suspect tender advances.
- "Yes. I would rather kiss this hand once, than to recover the ring."

Doris looks down at her hand which he releases, and a slow blush steals over her face. Alan's voice is very earnest. Doris especially likes his speaking voice.

"Well—" she says holding out her hand which is extremely pretty in shape and very white, this warm day.

Alan does not offer to take it.

"Not now," he says quietly. "Dr. Lemist's boat is coming in and my aunt is not many rods away, watching us. But you have promised, remember.—Another time."

Doris withdraws her hand and blushes deeper than before. It seems now a boldness to have offered in She turns and walks swiftly toward the tent.

### CHAPTER XXII.

#### RAIN-BOUND.

THE black cloud has spread directly overhead and the rain is beginning to descend in noisy sheets when Miss Fortune, panting heavily, gains the tent where the others of the party are already sheltered.

"But where are the doctor and Miss Fayette?"
The cry comes in chorus.

"They've gone to—a house—up there," pants Miss Fortune, waving her hand indefinitely.

"Why did n't they come here?" asks Mrs. Saltonstall.

"Dr. Lemist would not let her come. He said the tent would n't be protection enough. She tried to run but she could n't, the pain in her side was so great; so he carried her."

"She looks badly to me to-day," remarks Doris, and Hepsy goes to the opening, and cranes her neck out into the rain as though minded to make search for the couple.

"I wonder if he'll dry her off good," she mutters, withdrawing again into the tent.

"Who would have looked for this!" says Rachel. annoyed.

"It is better luck than the sky promised," observes

Alan. "Surely you are not regretting the rain. See it beat the waves down into calm. Do you remember that tremendous shower we watched on Lake Como—how every drop rebounded so far that it looked as though a sudden growth of glass had sprung up all over the surface of the water?"

"That was different," replies Rachel, quietly but with a swelling heart, as she recalls those happy days.

"Did you visit Italy, Miss Gale?" pursues Mr. Burley, throwing himself down next Miss Saltonstall on the shawl on which the two young ladies are sitting.

"Yes, I was in Florence a short time last Winter." Doris speaks constrainedly, displeased to be conscious of coloring, and ashamed to be weighed down by so vivid a sense of that unpaid debt as, for the first time in her life not to know what to do with her hands.

"Florence in Winter! What memories that awakens!" remarks Burley, leaning on his elbow and looking meditatively out at the rain. "When I first went there to study it was in the Winter. I had n't too much money, and was determined to make what I had go as far as it would; well, you should have seen how I lived there in a little stone cell in the fourth story of an apartment house."

"I wish you would not talk about it," interrupts Mrs. Saltonstall with less than her usual placidity. "If I had known you did not have every comfort, I should not have allowed it."

"Nonsense, Aunt Catherine. I had comforts, plenty of them; only my room was rather cool some-

times, especially early in the morning. Its floor was of damp, icy tiles, and the only semblance of a covering on them was a piece of very thin carpet about eighteen inches square, placed beside a high, iron bedstead. A very few mornings of jumping carelessly out upon the bare tiles and by that means getting about as suddenly and thoroughly waked up as it is possible for a mortal to be, gave me the machine-like accuracy of movement which rendered it just possible to land both my feet upon my somewhat limited tapestry. This accomplished, a series of violent contortions brought myself and carpet to the wash-stand, and afterward a few minutes of vigorous wriggling placed the same inseparable friends before my clothes, where I balanced myself in various painful and precarious positions until I pulled my boots on and was then triumphant."

"Alan!" expostulates comfortable Mrs. Saltonstall, laughing silently.

"That did not last long. I gave up such rigid economy and betook myself to where I had more carpet."

"Go on," says Rachel, "we want to be amused. You always have one more experience to relate if you only feel in the mood. Take pity upon us."

Mr. Burley changes his position, and responds with a repressed smile at certain recollections.

"Among the more vivid of my memories of life in that room are my tailoring exploits. Sewing never came naturally to me for some reason, and I always put it off until the unoccupied sites for buttons became so alarming that procrastination ceased to be a virtue, then came the tug of war! My programme was as follows: I drew forth from among my traps a small blue bag with a puckering string at the top-prepared by the best of aunts against such emergencies—and into this I inserted two fingers. Soon a sharp and decided sensation would convince me that my search was successful. Withdrawing my fingers, to one of them would be found depending a small strip of flannel containing some half dozen needles of different sizes. Selecting one of these, and laying it upon the table as though it were something that would certainly go off and damage me if not handled carefully, my next care was to select my thread. I usually favored the black linen article, and unrolled a long length of it. This, after several futile attempts to bite it off as I had noticed some of my feminine friends do, and then cutting my fingers in vain efforts to break it, I would finally saw off with a knife against the edge of the table. Then followed repeated and frantic tentatives to pick up the needle with my cold fingers, which, being finally accomplished, I used to settle myself before the window and then after a few minutes of preliminary smoothing and twisting, would commence the real business of threading my needle. Getting my hands up between my nose and the light I commenced an extended repetition of these three motions, shoving the thread past one side of the needle, then past it on the other side, and then doubling it up against the eve. For the first five minutes I would regard the operation with a countenance expressive of

great earnestness, and a disposition on the part of my tongue to perform its share of the labor. During the succeeding five minutes I would whistle softly some familiar air. At the end of this time my thread was usually fraved out to about the diameter of a copper cent, when I would drop everything to clear my throat and lean my head on my hand a few minutes before recommencing. Gathering together my materials after a breathing spell, a few more short, sharp conflicts would place upon my brow the victor's crown; whereupon I would bring together the two ends of the thread, drop the needle and proceed with both hands to the formation of a knot. Sometimes this operation was at once successful; but more often I would find on dropping the needle, that I retained between my numbed and stiffened fingers but one of the ends. whereat the treacherous steel would promptly seize the opportunity to glide off the smooth thread and fall lengthwise into a crack between two tiles, from which stronghold it could only be ejected by the exercise of much firmness and a toothpick. Supposing good luck to have attended my exertions, however, the actual sewing had now to be accomplished. If it was a clear case of buttons, the button itself had first to be found. Now I must say for that best of aunts if there was one thing she did stint herself on in getting up my sewing outfit, that thing was not buttons. I had a complete assortment of them from the immense horn affair, belonging by nature to a coachman's overcoat, to the smooth, shiny brass buttons whose mission it is to ornament the front and back of a blue swallow-tail

This collection I would endeavor, holding on to the bottom of the bag and agitating it mildly, to shake out upon the table; but they would n't come on account of the puckering string. Then, in a fit of temporary insanity, I would shake a little harder, when, of course, all the buttons would fly out together, and starting off in every direction, range themselves neatly against the wall under the bed, bureau, and washstand. Very naturally the getting together of my flock required some time, and one or two hastily selected and forcible expressions not found in the original text of Watts; after which, business was proceeded with. Having placed the button with infinite care and precision, the process of securing it commenced, and although a little difficult and precarious at first, I was usually able, using for a thimble the bedpost, window-sill, or any object near me, to bring it to a glorious and successful termination; alternately howling and whistling meanwhile, as my needle, after long and obstinate refusal to go through any of the holes would at last choose one with capricious suddenness, and rushing through, impale some unfortunate digit on the other side. My trials in that line over for the day, the exercises would be closed by the singing of that beautiful hymn, beginning, 'This world is round and like a ball, And so are all things here below!"

Mr. Burley's account is received with great applause. "It is the very time for story telling," remarks Rachel. "I wish I had a genius for it. Can't you give us an experience, Doris?"

Doris smiles out at the rain.

"The time when I remember discomfort and pleasure to have been most hopelessly mingled, was at Giessbach one evening when we were waiting to see the falls illuminated. I suppose you have been among the Swiss lakes, Miss Saltonstall. You have not? The hotel at Giessbach is half way up a mountain, in a forest of spruce and fir trees. The grounds are romantically laid out, and hedged into winding walks and bowers. From them you look out upon the smooth, green lake—a basin, surrounded by the Alps. It was a peculiar effect, looking down from such a height upon the water where the steamboats looked like smoky ducks and the row boats like those little black things we children used to call money-bugs. Of course the effect is greatly heightened by the Giessbach, which starts at the crest of the mountain and falls in long, snow-white cascades into the lake below. There was a terrible thunder-storm on the evening of our arrival, and the night was cloudy and as dark as pitch, except when the blinding white flashes brought out mountain and lake, forest and cascade for an instant, and then it was darker than before. About half past eight, which was the time set for the illumination, it began to rain very hard, and poured during the whole exhibition, so about two hundred of us wretched mortals stood there for three-quarters of an hour in the rain. We started out defying the weather, but I was just beginning to think I was paying too much for any scene, when a rocket went up. Umbrellas were pushed aside and pulled down, and everybody was on tiptoe.

Whizz! went a second rocket, and as it burst the mountain side suddenly looked like-how can I describe it! The whole series of cascades, six hundred feet in height, down through the black night of the forest, was changed to molten silver with showers of pearls and diamonds on every side, and this was bordered by a narrow edge of dark green firs. I can not make you see it as I did. This was the white light. Then that faded and was followed by red, blue, purple, and green, piling splendor upon splendor, while the dense white smoke from the chemical lights rolled down the mountain, filling the dark hollows with its fleecy masses, and forming an appropriate background for this fairy spectacle. Three minutes of this and it faded into night, and there we were, wet and cold again, gazing into nothing."

"Miss Nash, it is your turn," suggests Alan. "We know you have a talent that way."

"Tell us something, Hepsy," begs Miss Fortune.

"I don't know as I can," she replies with a suppressed sigh. What with her grief at parting from Ino, her wakeful, exciting night, and her anxiety about Lenore, Miss Nash feels more like retreating to her doubly lonely home and its serene quiet than like eudgeling her brains for the amusement of her companions.

"Any adventure by land or sea will be acceptable," says Mr. Burley. "For instance an anecdote of — say railroad travel."

Hepsy gives him one quick look, but his expression is innocence itself.

"I can't think of any story," she begins, embracing her knee with both hands, "but I rec'lect one mortifvin' thing that happened to an uncle o' mine, once. He used to have a friend, a deacon in a church, in the village where he lived, a dreadful proper, soft spoken kind of a man, always just so polite an' precise. His name was Brown. Well, my uncle's folks had a way o' sleepin' late Sunday mornin's, an the milkman that supplied 'em, he used to have to knock 'em up sometimes, an' then most gen'rally my uncle would go down an' get the milk. Well, one Sunday early as usual there came the knock at the door. My uncle was dreadful sleepy that mornin' an' he calc'lated to go down an' get the milk an' then go back to bed for forty more winks. So down he went, his eyes half shut, an' grabbed up the pitcher they used an' opened the door just a little way. He stuck his arm through, an' says he, 'one quart!' He was a gruff speakin man an' half asleep at that. There was n't no answer so he flourished the pitcher an' roared again,—' One quart!' Then some one spoke outside of the door in a gentle, mournful kind of a voice. 'Good mornin' Mr. Nash. I called to say that my wife passed away in the night, and would you attend to the sad details for me.

"My uncle knew the voice an' knew too that Miss Brown had been given up for two years past. He throwed open the door, perfectly dumbfounded at his mistake, an' showed Mr. Brown into the best room an' sat down to hear what he wanted him to do, perfectly forgetful of his own condition until the visitor riz up to go, sayin' 'I mistrust I'm givin' you a cold, neighbor!'"

Hepsy pauses abruptly, and gives a humorous look around at her auditors in sympathy with their laughter.

"See, it is brightening," says Rachel. "Alan, there is just time for you to sing us a song before it clears off."

Miss Fortune echoes Miss Saltonstall's invitation, but Doris is silent. She has always felt it to be the most embarrassing of attempts for a single voice to perform without accompaniment, but Mr. Burley does not appear to find the proposition embarrassing.

"What shall I sing?" he asks.

"Whatever you like."

So, without changing his position he begins, his voice sounding thrillingly sweet and sustained to the accompaniment of the softly pattering rain:

"I'll sing thee songs of Araby,
And tales of fair Cashmere—
Wild tales to cheat thee of a sigh,
Or charm thee to a tear;
Through those twin lakes where wonder wakes.
My raptured soul shall sink,
And as the diver dives for pearls
Bring tears, bright tears to their brink.
And dreams of delight shall on thee break,
And rainbow visions rise,
And all my soul shall strive to wake
Sweet wonder in thine eyes."

As he finishes, Doris adds her quiet thanks to those of the others, then rises and goes to the door of the

tent. The rain has ceased, and the calm, dull-colored water is turning blue under the breaking clouds. She goes out, and has taken but a few steps when Burley joins her.

"You will get your feet wet," he says, and the practical suggestion causes Doris to be more impatient than before with the moisture in her eyes.

"I do not mind it," she returns, walking unconsciously faster, with her face averted from him.

"Have I displeased you?" he asks, anxiously, and then she looks at him through her full eyes.

"No, indeed, but—go back, please."

"Not until you tell me what troubles you," says Alan, inwardly exultant. What has happened to move her? If it is only his voice, then indeed for the first time he truly prizes it.

She does not reply to this, and he continues, while the sun bursts out, bright and warm.

"I can not bear that you should be unhappy."

"I am not unhappy," Doris says, slowly, then looks up smiling and dashes away a tear with a quick movement of her hand. "I may as well confess that the music made me cry."

"And I venture to say that it does not ordinarily have that power," returns Alan as they stand still beside the water.

"No—only when it happens to be the last straw falling upon other things."

"I should say you had little to trouble you in this life, Miss Gale."

"That is what people always say of me," replies the girl with an enigmatical expression.

"Of course I have no right to an opinion—and certainly I have none to question you, but—"

"I have nothing to tell any one," interrupts the

girl, hastily. "My life is simple enough."

"No dark secrets in your story," Burley says, lightly, feeling a thrill of sympathetic pain as he sees his companion shrink.

She faces him with sudden resentment. "If there were it would be no matter; Rachel says so. She says it is no matter what has been compared to the importance of what is."

"That is thoroughly orthodox," Alan returns, cheerfully; "and you are certainly in the way of your duty at present, comforting the sick."

" Who ?"

"Why, me, to be sure."

Doris smiles. "I am glad that is such an obvious joke."

"At least," says her companion, growing grave, "I am in earnest in saying that you—that I am happier when you are by than at any other time."

Doris looks up, startled by so broad a confession, but the expression of Mr. Burley's face is a safe one.

"You remind me strongly of a person in whom I once took a deep interest," he adds thoughtfully, and Doris feels awed by the suggestion of that mysterious romance.

"Every time I look at you it is a great pleasure," he continues, availing himself liberally of the comfort.

"Was the ring I dropped—hers?" asks the girl, timidly.

"Yes."

"Ah!" Doris looks the picture of contrition.

"But you remember I am to be indemnified for the loss of the ring."

She frowns slightly at this, and hides her hand beneath the hat she is carrying.

"That seems so flippant a thing to think or say," she returns.

"Does it, when you reflect how closely you resemble her? It is she beside whom I seem to be standing, now, and who listens to me with such kindness and patience. If you were really she I think you would give me that rosebud in your dress."

Doris touches the stem like one in a dream. How strange for her, who may have no romance of her own, to be thus enacting the shadowy title *rôle* in another's. There is something fascinating in the idea. It passes through her mind that the woman whose proxy she is must have loved this man wholly. How, she wonders, must it seem to be free to love and to be beloved.

She takes the drooping rose from her breast and fastens it in Alan's coat.

"Thank you, Doris," he says, tenderly.

She looks up. "What was her name?" she asks. "Doris."

"Truly?—Forgive me," putting up her hand as though she had committed a desecration. "I did not mean to doubt you."

"Yes," he says, kindly, holding her eyes with his earnest gaze, "her name was Doris."

"Doris!" A loud call interrupts them,

"It is Rachel. It is time for us to go," says the girl, speaking like one suddenly wakened. "Au revoir. I suppose you will return as you came?"

She holds out her hand, and even leaves it in his a moment, as though hoping he will relieve her by taking the privilege she has accorded him. But he makes no effort to do so. She colors under his parting glance. His imagination must be very vivid. If she were indeed the original Doris his eyes could scarcely rest upon her more ardently.

Left alone, Mr. Burley looks musingly out over the water. "Supposing she should never love me!" he thinks. "It was all I stayed for—to find her. I wonder if I might better have died."

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

## DR. LEMIST'S CONFIDENCE.

MEANWHILE Dr. Lemist is chafing inwardly at the long duration of the shower.

As Miss Fortune related, as soon as his boat touched shore, and the first drops fell, he caught Lenore up in his arms, an expostulating bundle, and ran with her to the nearest cottage, and entering without ceremony, he deposited her on a chair before the astonished eyes of the mistress of the house.

"Well!" ejaculates the startled woman, turning from her dish-washing as the door bursts open.

"Excuse me," says the doctor, abruptly. "This young lady is ill, and I could not wait in the rain to knock."

Lenore is leaning back in her chair, her hand pressing her side, and as she laughs the tears well over.

"See how unkind you are to make me laugh," she says, reproachfully. "It nearly kills me. I told you so."

"There is nothing to laugh about," replies Dr. Lemist, opening a window and moving her chair out of the draught while the hostess whisks sundry unsightly litter into the closet and draws forth a chair for the doctor, whose kind face is well known even in this neighborhood.

"Is not?" responds Lenore. "Think how comical you must have looked, racing up from the water with me;" but her retrospect appears to be serious now.

"What evil genius moved me to bring you at all?" mutters the doctor.

"I believe I am ill," replies Lenore to the anxiety in his eyes. "I feel chilly," she adds with a slight shudder.

"Yes, I suppose so," replies her companion, a promptness coming into his manner. "For how many days have you been having fever?"

"I have not had fever."

"How long have you felt this pain when you laughed?"

"O, more than a week."

"And your appetite?"

Lenore replies by a shrug which might mean anything.

"Do you find yourself able to eat pretty well?"

"I do not care much about it. I think I am out of the habit a good deal," adds Lenore with a fleeting smile. "Aunt Deborah does not believe in eating too much."

Dr. Lemist's face flushes. "If you have an attack of illness what sort of a nurse do you think Miss Belden will make?"

The girl shakes her head listlessly and looks out of the window, then back at her interlocutor with more interest, as though she had but just understood the import of his words.

"I have never had an illness. Do not say I must have one now."

"I think you will have to be very quiet for a few days, perhaps longer."

"What is the matter with me?—or, no. On second thought I do not care to know. You will cure me very soon, won't you?"

She asks it without any anxiety.

"I cannot be certain about doing so, soon," he replies.

Lenore looks at him reproachfully, as if to accuse him of disobligingness.

He places his fingers on her little brown wrist, and then rises and walks twice up and down the floor.

The woman of the house looks anxiously at him, then sharply at Lenore. "Look here, doctor, I hope it aint nothin' catchin'," she observes.

"I hope not," replies the pre-occupied man.

The woman pauses a moment with her hands on her hips, then bursts forth into whining complaint and self-justification. "I would n't ha' thought it o' you, doctor, that you'd bring a fever case in here, just cause I'm poor an' you can impose upon me. Ef we all fall sick it would be only justice for you to take care o' the hull on us. I don't want to complain but what you've allers done your part before, but why you should bring a girl in here with the fever, an' me without a bit o' carbolic in the house, an' why—"

"Hold your tongue!" commands the doctor. "This young lady may have some difficulty with her lungs, but she has nothing infectious. Miss Fayette, sit still, I beg of you," for Lenore with a glance of repugnance at her red-faced hostess, has risen and moved to the door.

"Let us go home," she begs in a low tone, raising her large, frightened eyes to his. Never has her face seemed so small and pathetic.

"Yes, we will go. It is clearing. Wait here five minutes while I bring the horses."

"O, let me go with you!" The appealing glance and the hand slipped into his, tug at the doctor's heart-strings.

"You see how wet the grass is," he says, gently. "You must not come, but I will be back immediately."

Lenore looks after him, and the thin voice of her entertainer speaks from behind her.

"Do set down while you're waitin', Miss. I'm awful put out to think I made the doctor mad, but I wish for your sake you did have the fever, sooner than anythin' the matter o' your lungs. You look mighty delicate. I had a sister went just so."

"Went where?" Lenore turns her solemn eyes on the speaker.

"To heaven, I hope," rather testily. "Nothin' like gallopin' consumption to carry a body off. Some takes months to it, but some goes in a few weeks. How long have you had it?"

"I—I do not know," hesitates Lenore, still gazing as though fascinated at the speaker.

"That's allers the way. They never know how or when it begins. I s'pose you've got a little cough."

"Yes."

"That's it," ejaculates the woman in tones of deep gratification, "but you did n't know you had to do anythin' for it till the doctor noticed you. That's it. That was just like my sister—exactly."

But before many details of this sister's illness have been recounted, to Lenore's inexpressible relief, the doctor's buggy appears.

"I wonder if you had not better borrow a shawl," he says, coming into the cottage with a dubious look at the cambric dress and downcast geraniums.

"No, I could not bear it," replies Lenore, preceding him out of doors in her impatience.

The doctor says a brief good-day to their enter tainer, and they are off.

"I am afraid you are in pain," he says, tenderly, noting her face.

"Not more than before, only that I notice it more. Have you not a great many friends, Dr. Lemist?"

"As many as the average, I suppose," he replies, puzzled.

"But I mean near friends. Friends that would mourn and feel that their hearts were breaking if you should die."

"Yes, I have a few. Three maiden aunts."

Lenore looks at him, amused. "How funny," she says.

"Not funny at all. Serious. I have to support them. Then I have a niece. I think she cares for me. She is an orphan."

"Oh, poor thing," muses Lenore, "I can sympathize with her. I was thinking that if I were to die, there would be no one to care."

"How can you say so!"

"O, they would care. They would say, 'That poor little Lenore Fayette is dead. Does it not seem sad?

She was so young to die!' But that is all. I do not believe one person would remember to care even that much a week."

"It hurts me to hear you say that, Lenore. I, for one, should feel that the whole world was sad if you were gone."

"Really?" Lenore looks at him with mingled curiosity and gratification. "Do you really like me so much as that?"

"Yes. I am alone, too, in spite of the many friends you talk about, and I have a fellow-feeling for you."

"But why do you live alone. Why do you not marry?"

"There are two reasons," replies the doctor, quietly, "and I will tell you them, in confidence. One is that the woman I love does not love me."

"Then she is horrid," asserts Lenore loyally.

Her companion smiles. "You do not compliment my taste. No, she is very lovely; but she is very young; perhaps too young ever to be satisfied with me."

Lenore's intuition suddenly seizes his meaning. She casts one half-frightened glance up at his grave face and then looks straight ahead.

"Do I know her?" she asks faintly.

"Yes, you know her, and you see now that she is not to be blamed. Besides, supposing this young girl could see something to love in me—"

"Oh, there is something to love in you!" she exclaims contritely.

"Do not distress yourself Lenore. When you hear

my other reason you will see that you need not. Supposing this sweet girl could love me as I wish to be loved, she is a poor girl and I could not marry her because it takes so nearly the whole of my income to support the four women already dependent upon me."

Lenore looks with a very grave, white face straight ahead still, but she leans slightly toward her companion.

"Perhaps, doctor, that foolish young girl is not going to get well."

"No danger of that, dear child."

"She said so — that dreadful woman," says Lenore, shuddering. "She said I had galloping consumption!"

"How could you listen to her! That is the most absurd nonsense."

"You left me there and made me listen to her. Beside, do they not always deceive very sick people, as you are, perhaps, doing now?"

"I do not."

"I am so glad, I had much rather live."

"In five minutes you shall rest," Dr. Lemist says simply, as the horses spring forward.

As they enter Elmdale, Lenore presses closer to her companion's side, as though she dreaded to relinquish his strong protection. "I hope you feel very valiant," she says.

He only smiles in answer, and lifts her down very carefully, when they reach the house. But careful as he is, she shrinks from the sharp pain that comes at the movement.

"Shall I walk right in?" he asks, trying the door, which, however, does not yield. He rings the bell, loud and long, but the sharp summons evokes no sign of life from the grimly closed house. Every window blind is made fast.

"She has gone away," says Lenore, gazing at the doctor in dismay. "It is her way of punishing me," she adds, with what would be a laugh if she were able to indulge in that luxury. "Look under the doormat, the key may be there." But no key is there. The doctor makes Lenore sit down on the step while he tries the window shutters.

"I shall have to break one," he says, at length. "I cannot let you remain out doors any longer."

"No, no, do not do that. What shall I do!" bursts forth Lenore, lifting her wretched feverish face. "If it were not for making them so much trouble, I would go straight to the Fortunes. This is my aunt's way of telling me she is done with me."

"How much trouble I have brought upon you, my dear child," says the doctor, tenderly. "I cannot let you go to Mrs. Fortune. You would have to be under too much obligation to her."

Across the anger and pain that is filling the speaker's heart, there suddenly flashes a beneficent image. It is the remembrance of Hepsy Nash.

"Do you feel equal to a drive to Hillside Farm?" he continues. "Hepsy would welcome you with open arms."

"Yes, I will go," returns Lenore, with a kind of patient humility, very touching from her. "You do

not know how terrible it is to feel one's self the odd person in the world, and now I am going to be ill and more burdensome than ever."

"My darling, do not say so," returns the other, impetuously, lifting her again into the carriage. "Lean against me, Lenore, you feel the breeze too strongly, I am sure. It will be dusk by the time we get up the mountain. We will go to Miss Saltonstall's and get you a shawl;" and again the swift horses start.

Just outside the gate, they shy in passing some one in the road. Dr. Lemist draws them up and leans forward eagerly. He is not disappointed. The pedestrian is Miss Belden. She bows with mock respect.

"Ah, still driving, doctor? A lovely evening, is it not?" and would pass on but that he replies, in a stern voice.

"I am glad to have met you, Miss Belden. Miss Fayette is ill and as we could not gain admittance to your house, I am taking her to Mrs. Fortune's."

Miss Belden's very bonnet strings tremble with rage. "Taking her to Mrs. Fortune's, eh? Since when have you taken the direction of my niece's movements? Lenore, get out of that buggy."

"You are mistaken," the doctor replies, coolly, in spite of the exasperation of the sharp voice. "Miss Fayette is not able to walk. I will take her back to the house if you like," and without waiting for a reply, he wheels round and drives back to the door, casting an anxious look at his companion's dull eyes.

Miss Belden has little faith in the fact of Lenore's

illness. She regards it as a clever ruse to divert her wrath at her niece's disobedience, and her uncompromising face as she unlocks the door may well inspire Lenore with terror; but their eyes have not yet met. She holds the door open for the girl to pass in, then turns to the doctor.

"Good evening, sir," she says shortly.

"Not yet, if you please, I must speak with you," replies the gentleman, returning her vindictive glance steadily.

"That you will not, sir, I can assure you," she rejoins, a steely glitter coming into her eyes.

With a quick movement he passes her, and stands within the hall.

"Get out of my house," she exclaims, her withered cheeks reddening, and an ungovernable fury rising in her face. "If you refuse, I will see what my usual treatment of sneak-thieves will effect."

"Madam, you are forgetting yourself strangely," he says, sternly. "Lenore," turning to the girl who stands by, white and horrified, "go up stairs, please, and prepare yourself for a professional visit."

"Ah, indeed!" exclaims Miss Belden. "Lenore.' You have not wasted the day. Matters have progressed, apparently."

"Miss Belden, you are saying what you will surely regret, ten minutes hence."

The doctor's tone restores the spinster to her usual caution.

"Sir," she returns, trying to make her trembling voice austere, "I am not the one to experience regret."

"Listen to me," he says, peremptorily cutting her sentence short. "Your niece has a high fever. I fear she is on the eve of a tedious illness. She will probably need careful nursing."

Miss Belden bites her lips angrily.

"Is it your usual method with such cases to prescribe excursioning?"

"I knew nothing of the state of affairs—" begins the doctor.

"Except what little I told you. I told you she was not well, nor able to go. The blame of her illness, if she has one, will rest upon you. It will be your duty to see her through it."

The doctor bows.

"If you do your part as assiduously as I intend to mine, we shall soon have her up again. I must go home for something I wish to use, but will return immediately," and without further parley he hurries away, leaving Miss Belden standing in the hall, angrily rebellious at the prospect. Only one soothing reflection supports her. Dr. Lemist cannot, in decency, charge anything for his services.

# CHAPTER XXIV.

# LENORE'S DISCOVERY.

TT is five days later, about ten o'clock in the morning, and Miss Belden is at work in her kitchen, feeling extremely out of temper. The doctor has peremptorily set aside her proposed regimen of tea and toast for the sick girl, and ordered instead a preposterous diet of various broths, eggs, and milk, which order Miss Deborah dares not openly disregard for the speech of people, and consequently punishes herself and her iron kettles, both subjects being alike impervious to harsh treatment. Herself she nearly starves, and her kettles she bangs about with a clatter which strikes terror to the shrinking soul above her, and makes a hand which is doubled outside the kitchen door ready to knock, pause. But the hand, which belongs to a stout heart, redoubles itself immediately, and gives a gentle but audible tap.

Miss Belden straightens her cap and recalls the fact that she is Miss Belden, then answers the call. Before her stands Hepsy Nash with a small pitcher in her hand.

"Good mornin', Miss Belden," she says conciliatorily. "I called to know how Miss Fayette's a gettin' along."

"Very well, I thank you." Miss Belden's reply is icy, but it is civiler than Hepsy had dared expect.

"I thought I might be o' some use to you with the extra work and worry. I can come as well as not, if you'd like to have me stay an' help a spell," she ventures with extraordinary humility.

"I believe I told you a day or two ago I do not

need any help."

"I brought some cream I thought she might relish," Hepsy says after a moment of silence, during which the speakers eye one another, closely, and slipping adroitly by Miss Belden, she deposits the pitcher on the kitchen table.

"Thanks," replies the other, holding the door open, significantly.

"If you'll let me have a fork, I'll whip some on it up an' get it ready to send up to her."

"I won't trouble you."

"You mean you won't let me."

"Yes."

"Well, can I see her a minute?" asks Hepsy, desperately.

"No. No one sees her but the doctor and myself."

"I could save you lots o' trouble if you'd let me stay."

"You are entirely too officious, an old fault of yours, Hepsy Nash," Miss Belden replies to this pleading.

Hepsy's wits work fast. Her anxiety as to the nursing Lenore is receiving increases day by day, and this is not the first repulse she has received in the past week. Carefully watching her enemy's face, she speaks with assumed carelessness.

"Have you heard anythin' from Mr. Bascom since the Squire died?"

It is a random shot and it tells; but not in the way Miss Nash has hoped. In mentioning this bosom friend of the late master of the house she has counted on rousing the intense inquisitiveness with which Miss Belden used to regard his visits to her brother, and thus to gain a little time, if nothing more. But the sound of his name is to Miss Deborah's wrath like the lighted match to gunpowder.

She trembles and breathes fast; her features twitch, but the life-long habit of concealment is strong, and endures the strain.

"What has given you reason to mention him? What has given you the right to question me?" she asks in unsteady tones. "Is my brother's lawyer yours as well? Elmdale does not need you, Hepsy. I wish you could comprehend that. Be kind enough to let us and our affairs alone, henceforth. Be good enough to leave this house at once. While I live you shall never set foot in it again. Take your pitcher—" for Hepsy is moving toward the door.

"What hurt'll it do you to let Lenore have that cream?" asks the latter, turning on the doorstep.

But Miss Belden has reached the limit of her strength. She grasps the pitcher from the table and hurls it past its owner's head. The door is slammed behind the visitor, and Hepsy, unmoved, regards the pieces of broken crockery and the rich liquid streaming across the green of the grass.

"There's more to her in the sound o' Mr. Bascom's name than I thought for," is her comment. "I'd like to get to the bottom o' that. If I knew the man's address I'm inclined to think he'd get a rare bird in the shape of a letter from Hepsy Nash."

She turns around, casts one loving, anxious, look at Lenore's windows and then leaves the grounds. Dr.

Lemist is just driving in.

"How is she?" he asks.

"I don't know. I could n't get in to see her. You aint worried, are you, doctor?"

"No, but I am not positive that she has the right nursing. I cannot find out what is wrong, but something must be or she would respond more quickly to the treatment."

"Well, give my love to her. I am worried nearly to death, but my hands are tied."

"You don't look well, yourself, Hepsy."

"Oh, I'll do," carelessly. "I seem to feel kind o' lonesome, lately, that's all, an' then worryin' about Lenore an' all."

"It was a pretty good thing for you to have that dog up at your place. I think I could get you another if you like."

"Thank you," responds Hepsy, drily. "No other dog for me. Good mornin', doctor."

In five minutes more, Dr. Lemist enters the bare apartment where Lenore lies quietly in bed, a little shawl about her shoulders. Her face looks small and white with its great dark eyes, and the black hair which lies, braided, over her pillow.

Her expression brightens at sight of the doctor, and she smiles a sincere welcome, which rouses his pity as he holds her hand for a minute.

"How lonely and forlorn the child must be to look so glad at my coming," is his thought. He has crushed the hopeful, hopeless lover in him, forever. He is only Lenore's physician, now and henceforward.

"How was the night, Miss Lenore?" he asks, in the hearty, quiet voice that is such a rest to the girl in these days of weakness.

"I had a good night. I slept beautifully."

"Ah, I thought so. Much heat, do you think, Miss Belden?"

"I cannot tell," responds Miss Deborah, from her station at the foot of the bed. It always makes her uncomfortable to be referred to. She is never ill herself, except for the rushes of blood to the head which annoy her occasionally, and she has little toleration, and no understanding of illness in others.

The doctor places the slim thermometer in Lenore's mouth. "Push it way back, under the tongue — way back to the wisdom teeth."

"Mine have not come," she mumbles.

"No levity. Remember you have to pay for that." Then there is silence while they wait, and Lenore looks from one to the other of her companions, and around the room, wondering if Dr. Lemist has to go into another in the village as stiff and unornamental as this.

He removes the thermometer, looks at it in silence and lays it on a table. Then he takes the stethoscope from its cover.

- "O must you use that again?" protests the invalid, smiling.
  - "Yes, Miss Lenore."
- "O dear," murmurs the girl, turning her face, and burying it laughingly in the pillow. "If you would look in the glass only once with those horns coming out of your ears—"
- "Miss Lenore," sternly, "I must forbid this nonsense. You may injure yourself by laughing."
- "Of course I do. I nearly kill myself. I told you so."
- "Lenore Fayette!" Miss Belden speaks with angry impatience. She is sure that Dr. Lemist's evident and absurd infatuation cannot outlast a scene of this description, and who knows but his disillusion will be the means of giving her a doctor's bill to pay.

But the desperation in Lenore's eyes, and the spontaneity of her amusement at the doctor's serious face between the curving tubes are infectious. He can hardly command his own risibles as he waits for her.

"You are wasting the doctor's time, Lenore," says Miss Belden, her voice pregnant with contempt.

Upon this the girl submits to the details of the examination. When she lies back upon the pillows the doctor's face is very grave.

"I want you to look at me, Lenore," he says severely, "and try to accustom yourself to the appearance of this stethoscope, for I shall have to use it for you, perhaps, many times, and it will be very annoying to have you give away to amusement, which is, after all, extremely—"

"Give me some water, please," Lenore interrupts, growing very white as she breathes the words.

Miss Belden springs to the stand and the doctor takes the girl's hand. "She will not faint away," he says as he holds the water to her lips.

Her color comes slowly back. "What made you feel faint?" he asks tenderly.

"I do not know; but you ought not to scold me," she says listlessly.

"Miss Belden," says Dr. Lemist, turning to her abruptly. "If you will get a little lunch ready, now. I prefer she should have something before her regular dinner at noon."

Miss Deborah goes with alacrity. She is glad to leave the room. Lenore had a startling look of her mother as she lay so white for that moment, against the pillows.

The girl still looks out of the window after her aunt is gone.

"I dare say your hours are very dull here," ventures the doctor. "What do you think about to amuse yourself?"

"I think of school, and my old friends, and the voyage back, and Miss Gale — and then the elms are my company."

"The elms?" following her glance to the small-

paned window.

"Yes. See how they keep nodding to me, and sometime they tap on the pane with their leaves to attract my attention. They can see my geranium bed rou know, and the brook."

- "I have been to see your geraniums, this morning."
- "You have?" her face lighting up.
- "Yes, and I imagined they looked rather dejected."
- "Of course, poor things," muses Lenore.
- "They seemed to me to beg to come into the house and see you," continues the doctor, reaching out for his hat, and bringing it to Lenore's side, filled with red blossoms.
- "Ah!" she exclaims, delightedly. "Of course that is what they wanted, and it is because you are so clever and kind that you understood them," and she reaches out her hand to his, involuntarily, but withdraws it before their fingers touch, while a faint color steals over her shy face.

If Dr. Lemist noticed it, he would welcome that momentary action and blush as a happy omen for him, but instead of yielding to pleasure, he quells his delight at the childish compliment.

"I am glad I did right to gather them," he says simply. "What is there to put them in?"

Lenore looks around, doubtfully. "Nothing prettier than that mug I fear; but they make everything beautiful."

When the flowers are arranged, she watches him wistfully as he gathers up his belongings. "Must you go?"

"Yes, Miss Lenore, if there is nothing more to be done for you."

She sighs, gently. "I seem to have lain here a month already."

"You do not ask me to send any one to visit you," says the doctor, hat in hand.

"No. Aunt Deborah would not like that. When are you coming again?"

Again Dr. Lemist compels himself not to rejoice at the wistfulness in her tone.

"I may look in this evening," he replies, kindly.

"O, yes," Lenore exclaims, impulsively. "Good-bye."

"Good morning, Miss Lenore."

In the lower hall he meets Miss Belden, bearing the tray. She is gratified that he will see for himself how plenteously her niece is provided for; but Dr. Lemist takes little note of the lunch.

"The effusion that I feared has taken place," he says, gravely. "Now we must use the greatest care. She may recover steadily from this point, and she may grow much worse. It would do no harm for her to see one or two quiet friends during the day if you are too much occupied to be with her. It is tedious for her, of course," and the doctor hurries away to a less interesting patient.

Miss Belden continues on her way to the sick room.

"There, Lenore, eat that," she orders, presenting her burden.

"Thank you," replies the girl. She tastes the food and gently pushes it aside.

"What is the matter?"

"I am not hungry. Do not mind, Aunt Deborah. That wants something. I do not know what."

"Wherein it resembles you," returns the other, aghast at such effrontery.

"I am sorry to trouble you so much, but the doctor said I must have on fresh flaxseed as soon as he had gone."

Miss Belden's lips twitch impatiently. "The doctor is fortunate in not being obliged to pay for everything he orders," is all she says as she takes up the untouched tray and leaves the room.

Lenore turns a very little in bed, and looks at her geraniums, all aglow with life and beauty, then at the friendly elm-branches, nodding their congratulations through the window. Congratulations to whom? To the geraniums for having gained a coveted position beside their devoted mistress? or to Lenore, because in her heart is being born a happiness which makes it possible to bear hardship, neglect, and loneliness; a wonderful realization which has come slowly to her child-like mind, and which awes and puzzles her so tenderly, that this whole solitary day seems hardly time enough in which to approach and examine its restful, joyful possibilities?

## CHAPTER XXV.

#### A TEMPEST.

DURING the rest of the day Lenore is left, for the most part, to herself. Miss Belden's quiet footfall sounds but seldom at her door, and the few ministrations to her niece's comfort are performed in a more than ordinarily perfunctory manner.

Miss Deborah's morning colloquy with Hepsy stirred her deeply. She has been affronted by Lenore's neglect of the flavorless food. Altogether it is a day when she can summon an unusually large array of facts to prove herself a martyr, and yet when Miss Belden seeks her pillow this evening she is conscious of a singular mental discomfort which, analyzed, seems singularly like self-dissatisfaction. Sundry neglects of, and sundry hardships imposed upon her niece, insist in an impertinent and importunate way upon being remembered.

Miss Belden indignant and amazed turns her back upon them, drawing about her the mantle of self-righteousness, and that mantle having been sixty years in process of weaving is strong, and protects her so ably that in a short time she sinks into slumber. But it is a slumber destined to be disturbed. The sleeper soon falls to dreaming, and into these dreams walks no less a person than Mr. Simeon Bascom.

Miss Belden tries to turn her back upon him also, but he is not to be avoided.

"Tell me about Lenore," he repeats, following her from room to room as she hastens away from him.

"I will tell you nothing, nothing!" is her constant

reply.

"But you must," he answers sternly. "I have waited long enough. Why have you not come for me or sent for me? It is my responsibility. I will know what you are doing." He seizes her wrist. She still replies "I will tell you nothing, nothing!" repeating her words louder and louder as his pressure on her wrist grows greater, until her voice becomes a scream. She wakes with a start, and sits up in bed. There is a hurricane blowing outside. It is the wind whistling and shrieking about the house into which her voice has merged. A fright is upon her. She gets out of bed, feels her way to the bureau and lights the lamp, turning up the flame to its broadest limit, and then casts an apprehensive glance over her shoulder.

Banks of cloud rolling up, layer upon layer, obscure the moon.

Miss Deborah's heart beats strangely. Many a night she has spent entirely alone in the old house, but this is the first time that loneliness or apprehension has oppressed her. She fights the sensations that arise within her at the thought of the quiet, helpless form divided from her only by a narrow hallway. Its helplessness affects her painfully. She fights the impression of being arraigned before that young mother whose grief-charged reproaches seem borne on

the tempest that bends down the elms in its fury. Their boughs writhing and groaning so near her distracted ears seem to Miss Belden an expression of her own racked nerves. Without thought, excepting that the air of her room is suffocating, she moves to a window and throws it open. Simultaneously with the movement a vivid, forked flash of lightning gleams athwart the sky, there is a sharp report, lengthening into an angry roar, a gust of wind takes away her breath, and rushing past her blows out the light, and Miss Belden, shuddering in abject terror, pulls down the window and feels her way in the utter darkness of the room toward the lamp. The time seems unbearably long to her. A hundred visions present themselves in that half minute. Her brother's eyes as he uttered his dying wish, Simeon Bascom's shrewd countenance, Lenore's face in myriad changing phases most haunting of all with that subtle look of her mother.

There is another flash. It helps Miss Belden on her way, but it also makes her start with a defined, terrible dread. By its momentary light she thought she saw her door open and something still and white standing without.

In the horror of the seconds which follow—the eternity it seems to her—while she is blindly groping for the matches, Miss Deborah expiates full many a sin of omission and commission. At last she finds the box. She can hear her heart-beats as she kindles the lamp and with wide-staring eyes turns around. Her wildest apprehension is realized. The door does stand open. There does stand a white, still figure; the

cheeks hollow, the eyes solemn, **n** white bandage around the head. Miss Belden throws up her arms, makes a dash toward the door, closes it with a bang, and locks it; then suddenly her limbs grow heavy, she drags herself toward the bed, but cannot quite reach it, and groping blindly with her hands, sinks prone upon the floor.

Dr. Lemist is earlier than usual in his visit to Elmdale on the following morning. As he enters the grounds the first object which claims his attention is a tall tree near the gate from whose trunk a giant hand has torn a section, stretching from top to bottom.

"Ah, there is where it struck," he reflects. "How frightened Lenore must have been. What a forlorn place," he adds, looking up at the house which it seems to him has never worn so deserted an aspect as on this warm, still morning. The closed blinds have a sinister, repellant air. The quiet is insufferable.

With a wave of pity for the helpless young creature confined within the gray walls, he jumps from his buggy and pulls sharply at the bell. He is hardly surprised that no response comes. It is almost as though he had expected none.

Again he rings, and then steps back, looking anxiously up at the stone walls.

At last there is a slight sound from within, a fumbling at the bolt as of trembling fingers, and the door opens. He makes a gesture of surprise and dismay as Lenore stands before him. Her face is very pale and her dark eyes burning. Her black hair is unbraided and falls in heavy disorder about her

shoulders. Outside her wrapper she has folded a blanket torn from her bed, and her feet show bare above the little slippers into which she has hurriedly thrust them.

She flingsherself into the doctor's arms in an agony of weeping, and he, with a horrified exclamation, lifts her and carries her up to her room before he speaks.

"What is it? Lenore, Lenore, my poor little girl, what has happened?"

"Is my hair white?" sobs Lenore, still clinging to him as he bends over her.

"My dearest child, no. Don't try to talk yet."

"Then stay with me," she implores, trembling violently.

"Of course I will," he replies, and because it evidently comforts her he still encircles her with his arm, and she leans her small head, its hair rough and neglected, against his shoulder.

"I know it will make you worse to cry," he says, firmly. "Stop as soon as you can."

"I have been left alone to die," mourns Lenore.

The doctor holds her closer to him. "Surely, your aunt has not left you?"

"Yes she has. O, I thought you would never come."

"If I had known you were in trouble, Miss Lenore, I should certainly have come sooner," he says, laying her gently back on the pillow, for the sobs have ceased.

"Miss Lenore!" the girl repeats, lifting large, reproachful eyes to his.

"Would you rather I said Lenore?" he asks, his ardent love frightening him into being formal.

"Yes. Do you not care for me any more?" she asks, plaintively

How, he wonders, can she be so cruelly careless of him, but he replies with wondrous patience and quiet.

"Yes, I care for you as much as ever."

"I hope so. I feel as though some one must love and care for me very much all the rest of my life to make up for the past week, and above all," with an involuntary shudder, "for this frightful morning."

Dr. Lemist in momentary aberration of mind thinks of offering himself for the position; but no! Never another sentimental word from him to this fancy-free maiden.

"Tell me about this morning," he says.

"Dear - say dear," corrects Lenore, exactingly.

The doctor hesitates, colors, then with something like a groan, complies.

"Tell me, dear," he repeats, in as fatherly a tone as he can manage.

Lenore takes a dainty hold of the edge of his coat, and keeps it while she speaks.

"It began with the storm. No, it began before the storm, for I had a headache come on in the evening and had to hunt for a big enough handkerchief to the around my head. Then, while I was still awake, the storm came. Of course you heard the dreadful thunder."

"Yes, I see one of your trees was struck."

"Ah, what a pity! I knew it must be near by. I was so frightened that I went to Aunt Deborah's

room. She was up, lighting a lamp, and perhaps seeing me suddenly startled her. I spoke her name but perhaps the wind drowned my voice. At any rate she shut the door in my face, and although in my loneliness, I knocked, I could get no answer. It was no matter, though, for after that the storm died down, and I came back to bed and went to sleep. This morning I woke early and wondered not to hear Aunt Deborah stirring, still I thought after her wakeful night it was not strange that she should sleep late; but when I heard the clock strike eight, I began to wonder that she did not bring my breakfast, and the more I wondered and strained my ears to listen, the more terribly still the house grew. I could hear the great clock in the hall tick, and that was all. At last I grew very much frightened but my strength came back a little, and I jumped up and went to Aunt Deborah's door. What a long journey it seemed! and I knocked. No answer. I knocked again, and called - Aunt Deborah, Aunt Deborah. No answer. I rattled the door handle. I believe I screamed. The door was locked and no sound answered me. Then I came back and threw on this wrapper, and in a minute, or an hour, I do not know which, you rung the bell."

"Poor little girl; and your aunt?"

"She must be dead," Lenore says, shudderingly.
The doctor stares at her. "That cannot be."

"Well, she must be," insists Lenore. "Will you go and try to get in, and do not be away long, or I shall follow you."

Dr. Lemist is absent five minutes and the girl hears

him break in the door. He returns with **n** shocked face.

"You are right," he says, briefly, "she is dead."

Lenore begins to tremble again with the horror and mystery of it all.

"I dislike to leave you, but I must drive to the nearest house and send word of this shocking occurrence," he says hurriedly.

The girl looks up at him with keenest reproach.

"Would you really leave me here? I tell you I shall die of fright if you do."

"Do you mean that? Can you not bear to be alone here for ten minutes?"

"No, if you care for me at all, stay with me."
"You will not go," Lenore says, with satisfaction, seeing him hesitate, "and you shall see how well I will behave. You can put on those horns as much as you please, I will not smile; and that thermometer, I will smoke it as long as you like."

Dr. Lemist nods and proceeds to insert the thermometer with grave forebodings as to what it will mark after so much disturbance. Then he sits down at a little distance from the bed, and deep silence falls again on the house. The great pendulum in the lower hall clicks regularly. What a terrible ordeal Lenore has indeed passed through. The doctor's head is drooped as he studies the face of his watch. When the hand marks the appointed minute, he looks up at his patient and rises. There is a slight redness in her cheeks, and the slim glass protrudes like a fittle cigarette from the corner of her lips; but great

tears are coursing down her cheeks, and her eyes are fixed sadly on her favorite window.

The doctor wipes the drops away with his own handkerchief, then looks at the thermometer. It is as he feared. Her fever has increased considerably. He mixes some medicine from a vial that stands on the table, and gives it to her, then sits down beside the bed again, and takes her hand, his heart throbbing painfully at sight of her tears.

Her small fingers close upon his gratefully.

"Now be calm as you can, dear. Close your eyes. You are perhaps tired enough to sleep. I shall stay with you until some one comes. "My soul!" he adds in sudden dismay. "You have had no breakfast."

Lenore smiles faintly. "Never mind, I do not want any."

"But you must at least drink some milk."

"I must?"

"I will go down stairs and find some."

"I would rather have you here, and feel your strength, it does me more good than to eat," Lenore says. "A minute ago I was crying because you seemed so grave and indifferent to me; but as soon as you take my hand I feel sure that you do like me."

"Like you. Ah, my little Lenore, it is cruel in you to talk to me so," he replies, impulsively. "You cannot know how hard the struggle already is for me to treat you just as you would wish to be treated."

"It seems to be," Lenore returns, with the accent of an aggrieved child.

The man beside her feels that old, tumultuous unrest

of the heart returning. He does not trust himself to speak.

"Why, I torgot that you did not know," the girl continues, feverishly.

"Know what, dear?"

"That is right. Call me 'dear.' Nobody ever did but you."

"Dear, dearest Lenore," he bursts forth.

"That is right," she repeats, with a sigh. "If my heart should ever be as large as yours I might love you as much as you do me. Until then I can only love you with all my might."

"Yes, dear little girl. You don't know what you are saying," rejoins the doctor, in a voice he cannot make steady. "But try to go to sleep, I shall always love you and be your best friend."

Lenore smiles a flickering smile. "I do know what I am saying," she replies in a weak voice, then adds, with a kind of childlike gladness in the pleasure she knows she is conferring.

"Kiss me."

The bed reels a little before the doctor's eyes, as he kneels beside it and reverently touches the red cheek with his lips, and then presses his cool one to it.

"Are you happy?" Lenore asks, curiously.

"Too happy, I am afraid, Lenore."

"No, you cannot be that. You are so good you deserve the best. I am not the best, yet I dare say I might amount to something if I ever had a chance to experiment. I am thirsty," she adds, abruptly. "I will be very brave and let you go down for the milk.

Go down a few stairs out of the kitchen, and you will find it, if there is any."

So Dr. Lemist goes down, without a word, glad to Jean on the banister as he descends. He does not mean to hold the girl to these feverish words; but their sweetness will ring in his ears all his life.

He enters Miss Belden's pantry and lifts the small pan of milk which is the only visible article of food on the long, bare shelves, and as he is pouring from it into a glass, a knock sounds on the kitchen door.

The doctor hurries to answer the call, glass in hand, and opens to Hepsy Nash, who stares to see the profession so far out of its orbit.

"I guess you're lost, aint you, doctor?" she inquires, peering past him for a sight of the enemy. "Well, I'm lucky to find you here. I was most afraid o' my life to come, but Miss Gale asked me if I'd leave these books here for Lenore,—she's so mad at Miss Belden herself she would n't face her. Miss Belden's turned her off like everybody else—"

"Don't speak of it now, Hepsy," interrupts the doctor, authoritatively. "I am glad you have come. Miss Belden was found dead on the floor of her room this morning. Please notify the authorities and come directly back here."

Words are as inadequate to describe Hepsy's countenance at this juncture, as she finds them to express her varied emotions. She drops the books on a chair, flings her hands up dumbly, and in a minute more is driving down the street, while Dr. Lemist returns to his patient.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

#### PAYING DEBTS.

A ND now for a few days it seems to Doris Gale that she has found her niche. It is she who condoles with Hepsy over the emptiness of the larder at Elmdale. She who suggests appetizing dishes for the invalid. She who soothes the wrath of the doctor and Miss Nash when it is discovered that Lenore's chest has been treated with applications of bran instead of flaxseed. She is Lenore's proxy to receive all who come. It is she who ushers the chosen few into the silent room where the dead woman lies, who arranges the flowers, and who lends, by the refinement and power of her presence, an extra impressiveness to the last ceremonies. She does not lack for Miss Fortune hovers longingly about, assistants. anxiously awaiting an opportunity to perform some little service for her beloved Miss Lenore, and with the interest of the Saltonstalls and Mr. Burley, in addition to that of the doctor and Hepsy, Elmdale becomes suddenly and vigorously taken care of.

It is the day after the funeral, and Doris is standing on the piazza with Dr. Lemist.

"It seems strange to think of Lenore as mistress of this great place," Doris says, musingly.

"An empty possession, I fear," he returns, "but she

has suddenly become rich in friends, and that sort of wealth will serve her for the present. Here comes one of them now," as Hepsy turns Tim's head in at the gate and drives toward them. "How happy the good creature looks," adds the doctor. "It is a great relief to her to be at liberty to come here once more and be free to do all for Lenore that her heart dictates."

But as Hepsy comes nearer they can see that there is a new excitement in her face. She approaches the piazza and pulls the reins toward her. "Whoa, Tim. Doctor, I've had an adventure. You'd never believe me if I told you what's happened unless I begin at the end o' the story instead o' the beginnin'," and half turning, she slaps the back of the seat. "Come up, Ino!"

And sure enough the little banished dog does come from under the seat and jumps up beside her; but such a changed Ino! His rough coat is soiled and travel-stained, and his dejection strikingly evident. He tries to meet the doctor's eye, but shame overcomes him, and he hangs his head, tapping his tail gently against the board.

"You see, I've had to scold him like all-possessed," explains Hepsy, when her companions' exclamations will let her speak, "so's he'd lie down in the bottom o' the wagon instead o' settin' alongside o' me, such an object as he is. I was comin' up from the barn where I'd ben harnessin' when J first ketched sight of him. He was runnin' in the gate, kinder eager, you know, an' I just called out to him an' then you'd think that

dog was crazy. I stayed long enough to feed him n little an' then I fetched him along. I could n't stop to clean him up any; but what's your opinion now, Dr. Lemist," she adds, triumphantly, "of advertisin' lost dogs?"

"I think it is n't always of much use. What do you mean, sir!" he exclaims, frowning heavily at the terrier, who sits up promptly. The sight of the unkempt coat, and the tired dirty paws that have trudged so long and faithfully, uplifted in apology, is too much for Hepsy, who pats and pets the little fellow with open affection. The doctor laughs.

"I think I understand," he says. "The man who answered the advertisement had but recently purchased the dog, and probably Ino had no particular affection for him, and made up his mind that you needed him the most, and so returned. Now, what is to be done?"

"I'll leave it to you, Doctor. You seem to have taken the case," is the dry response. "Miss Gale, I've fixed everythin' so's I don't believe you an' Mr. Burley'll have a mite 'o trouble. You're both on you very kind indeed to save my time that way;" and Hepsy drives on to the barn.

"She has really come to stay, then?" The doctor turns toward Doris.

"Yes, she has; at least, until Lenore is quite well. I think it an excellent plan, too. She knows the place perfectly, and there has seemed no question in her own mind as to her duty from the first."

"I should not suppose it would be an easy move for her to manage."

"Well, she has disposed of her live stock variously, and Mr. Burley told her that he would help me see to the rest."

"Very generous of Mr. Burley," observes the doc-

tor, glancing humorously into her face.

"Oh, we two are the idlest people in Alderley," she explains, laughing. "I presume he recognized the fitness of the arrangement; but, Dr. Lemist, to return to the subject of that cunning, affectionate little dog. I want Hepsy to keep him."

"So do I; but, from the tone of his owner's letter, I do not believe he will be induced easily to part with

him."

"Then he must be induced with difficulty," responds Doris, smiling. "Will you do it for me, Dr. Lemist? I wish to give Hepsy that little terrier."

"Why, certainly, Miss Gale, if you give me carte blanche-"

"I do, only please don't tell Hepsy."

"We all have a great deal to thank you for!" bursts forth the doctor, shaking her hand warmly, before descending the steps to his buggy. He even holds her hand a moment, in the fullness of the gratitude which he has kept pent up during these last days, and Miss Saltonstall and her cousin, coming up the drive in the phaeton, observe the action. Rachel looks slowly from the doctor to her cousin. There is in Alan's face a peculiar look of content which she has learned grows there whenever he goes to Doris, or she comes to him. To a casual observer, Mr. Burley's face does not alter when he catches sight of the

young girl on the piazza; but Rachel's fine sight perceives the radiance in his eyes, the subtle touches that love and happiness give his expression. She has learned to expect the change, and to watch for it. She has learned that the dearest hope of her life is futile. That hope has included all others. All is over and ended for her. There is a little proposition which she one day confidently propounded to Doris. God knows how often she states it in these days to her own aching heart.

"It is no matter what happens to ourselves, so long as we do right."

She repeats it now desperately, as they approach the piazza. It has not quite become an empty form. Nevertheless, she turns her head away from Burley's greeting of Doris, and devotes her attention to Dr. Lemist.

"Good news of her," replies the latter to her questioning, with a cheery nod—"always good news."

Miss Saltonstall looks at the kind face steadily. She is wondering if he, too, is enduring the wear of a ceaseless pain, and enduring it nobly as this. But her scrutiny avails her nothing. The busy doctor drives away with a sunny bow to them all.

"You had better get your things on immediately, Doris. I will stay with Lenore until you come back," says Miss Saltonstall, ascending the steps.

"Thank you," answers Doris, passing an arm around her, as they move into the house. "Mary is with her now, and she really is very comfortable. Hepsy has arrived, too; so, unless you wish to stay all the time, you will not need to." \*Will it be such a very long operation?" Rachel's manner and tone are cold, in spite of heroic exertion.

"Certainly not long," replies the other, eagerly.
"An hour or two, at most."

It is on Rachel's lips to congratulate her companion upon the accession of spirits which the change to Elmdale appears to have brought her; but she desists, happily for Mr. Burley, for, at those words, Miss Gale's easily awakened scruples would have taken a fright which would render her a very different companion from the laughing girl who drives up the mountain road beside him. The difference between the two women is striking. Rachel looks squarely at her grief and loss. Doris dares not face her happiness. She refuses to know the reason why, at home or abroad, she has never found foliage so green, water so bright, breezes so perfumed as in Alderley. She cannot, will not see wherein lies the wonderful charm of that winding road, and the unique picturesqueness of the lights and shadows in the landscape, as viewed from Hillside Farm.

"How lovely it is!" she says, pausing on the flat stone that serves Hepsy for a doorstep, and looking around on the hushed scene; "and how safe!" she adds, in murmur.

Alan has come, and stands below her, gazing at the same prospect.

"Yes; if one had a motive for being in hiding he could not do better than to take a lease of Miss Nash's farm."

"I do not know what that has to do with us," returns the girl, quickly.

"Why, no," says Alan, with a smile which Miss Gale cannot see, for his back is toward her. "All places are as equally safe for me as they are for you." After a moment he turns toward her, and adds quietly, "and all places are equally pleasant where you are."

Her heart beats, and the color mounts gradually and beautifully to her face. What a heaven this world might be! She does not dare to let the silence continue.

"You have a way of saying such things, Mr. Burley, that disarms one. You flatter as openly and as prosaically as if you were one's grandfather. One cannot condemn it. But we are wasting valuable time. Where is the key?"

"You do not call it a waste of time to study the beauties of nature," responds Burley, reluctant to let this leaf of the day's chapter be turned. "Not a cow left here to intercept the view— even the hens flown. I think we ought to go and see the pig. Hear him, left squealing alone! All his lovely companions have faded and gone."

"Where is the key?" reiterates Doris. "We came up here on business."

"Key!" and Mr. Burley draws forth from an inside pocket, half a dozen of them strung on a piece of blue tape. "We have the mansion at our mercy."

"Yes, and I know where they all fit," replies the girl, holding out her hand. He gives her the keys, and she opens the door and goes in. "How beautifully clean everything is," she observes; "but we have nothing to do in this room. The 'settin' room' is the field of our labors," and Alan follows her in there.

"Let us have some air to begin with," he suggests, and raises the little window. "What keeps the thing open!" he exclaims, after fruitless efforts to effect a "catch" somewhere.

"Don't lose your temper," remarks Doris. "Here," discovering a short stick which leans against the wall. "Would n't you know thrifty Miss Nash would have something to keep the window open with? This is a part of the rurality. I am surprised at your non-appreciation."

Mr. Burley draws forward the box Hepsy has prepared, and Doris kneels before it, filling it with the humble valuables which have been designated to her, as he brings them one by one, making some comment on each as it leaves his hands. It is not a long undertaking, although Mr. Burley does his conscientious best to lengthen it by ingenious blundering. Doris occasionally pauses with her hands on the edge of the trunk to look up at him, asking his advice with a distracting little frown or pose of the head, and to Alan, keeping up a running fire of humorous remarks because he dares do nothing else, heaven suddenly opens as a place where boxes ad libitum are packed eternally.

At last the lid falls. "That is done," remarks Doris. "Now you can rest yourself, Mr. Burley, while I do a little more in Hepsy's room." After she has gone into the adjoining apartment she opens the door a little way and puts her head out. "If you are fond of music," she Lays, "there is a melodeon in the front room."

Mr. Burley, standing at the window, looks at her over his shoulder. "If we had the Rubinstein book up here, you should accompany me in 'The Dream'!" Words fail Doris at the sacreligious suggestion.

Words fail Doris at the sacreligious suggestion. She puts up one hand with a horrified gesture, laughs and disappears, closing the door with energy.

Alan crosses his hands behind him, and humming snatches of the song alluded to, walks about the room inspecting the works of art on the wall. There are photographs in cone frames, and texts worked on cardboard; but most alluring of all to his eye is an ancient sampler. He pauses before it and eyes it curiously. The edges of the canvas square are worked in an ornamental pattern with pink and green silk. Across the top the alphabet appears in orange and blue characters, and below these the following carefully-worked couplet.

"Youth's a soft Scene, but trust her not.

Her moments fly more swift than Thought!"

But the glory of this creation lies in the considerably conventionalized landscape which occupies the lower portion of the square. Here are trees with brown silk trunks guiltless of shading, and symmetrical, woodeny sections of dense, green foliage. Perched on the extreme edge of one twig, is a huge yellow bird which looks minded to make two mouthfuls of its abiding place. A green hill rises at either side of the tree, and geometrically posed in the center of each summit is a white animal of equal size with the hill he is guarding. Presumably they are sheep. One

gallantly sports a pair of brown horns, but the other poor creature, whose knees bend beneath it, is visibly intimidated by a gigantic butterfly, who hovers near looking able to fly off with sheep, green hill and all. There are two more nondescript brown animals staring each other out of countenance, but excepting that each has four legs and a tail, and one a bright orange beak, there is no clew to their species. Just below the couplet appears the name of the industrious embroiderer, the year of her birth and the year given to this labor.

"Faith Steele, 1776, Œ 9+1785."

"Aged nine! Whew!" comments Mr. Burley, musingly. "See this, Miss Gale," as Doris returns, and she approaches and stands beside him studying the handiwork of Miss Nash's ancestress.

"I can picture her, poor little mite," remarks Doris, "working away in her high-backed chair, when she ought to have been running and playing."

Mr. Burley turns his back on the sampler and gives his whole attention to the speaker, although he hardly follows her flight of fancy.

"Well, have you done?" he asks, letting his eyes rest upon her.

"Yes. I believe the next thing now is for us to go home."

"Home," he repeats. "That is something neither of us has."

Doris raises her eyekrows and smiles, flicking some dust from her dress with a handkerchief.

"I don't know why you need intrude that gloomy reflection here."

"Before we go," he continues, "I wish to claim what you owe me."

She looks puzzled and then colors vividly, retreating against the breeze-blown curtain.

"I-I do not know what you mean," she says.

"Then why do you hold your hands behind you?" he asks, not following her, but smiling at the tell-tale posture which only makes her more charming than before.

"The debt is outlawed," she returns quickly. "I supposed you had forgotten that whim."

"O, no," he returns quietly. "I have thought of it every day. I did not mean to claim it here, but—I have changed my mind."

"And so have I," returns the girl. "I think you would—I am sure I should—would n": it look very silly for you to—to kiss my hand now?"

"There is no one to look."

"But," and Doris laughs a little, embarrassedly, "in such a cold-blooded way!"

"I will not do it coldly."

"O!" and the girl smiles again, but tears come into her eyes. "You have such a grandfatherly way of saying those things."

"That is very creditable to me under the circumstances, I think," he replies. "I think you owe me something for behaving so well."

She becomes suddenly grave. "I do certainly owe you a great deal," she says, and slowly draws her hand from its hiding-place and offers it to him.

He takes it deliberately in his strong clasp and keeps his eyes fixed on hers so troubled and shy.

- "Then," she asks, "we shall really be quits about the ring?"
- "Really, Doris. Is not the woman herself better than the ring?"
- "But I must tell you," she rejoins, low and hurriedly. "This is very childish. I can not pretend to be—Doris, any more, and you must not pretend to—"
  - "Must not pretend any longer to love you?"
  - " Yes."
- "I will not. I promise. Meanwhile," closing his other hand over the one he holds, "are you willing I should take the little you have conceded?"

She is breathing fast now, and struggling hard not to betray her agitation.

- "Oh, yes," she says, faintly; then there is a moment of silence, and she is released and trembling.
- "Let us go back," she exclaims, turning away, nervously. "I think we ought to hurry. Rachel is waiting."

# CHAPTER XXVII.

## "GOOD-BYE SUMMER!"

A FTER this day Doris no longer deceives herself. She has played with fire and it has burned her. She is on the point of ruining another life than her own. She alternately reproaches herself with tears, and goes dreaming off into one of the reveries that are her joy and sorrow. One thing is plain. It is her duty to see no more of Alan Burley. She can not leave Lenore quite yet, but as soon as she can do so, she will hurry out of temptation's way. The young girl's eyes follow her so wistfully and gratefully as she moves about the sick-room, Doris dreads to speak to her of going, but as days pass, Lenore improves fast, and she begins to set the time in her own mind for leaving.

She does not know where she is going. All places are alike outside of this, and she only knows she must leave Alderley. "I have been weak all my life," she thinks, "now it is time for me to be strong."

And her first trial of strength is refusing to see Mr. Burley when he comes over from the Saltonstalls one morning to make a friendly call. She stands by Lenore's window and watches him go, and Lenore watches her. Could the departed Miss Belden see her niece at present she would be obliged to own that care-

ful treatment has had a beautifying effect upon her. The girl is propped upon pillows, her shining, blueblack braids falling over the delicate blue of an embroidered wrap which Miss Gale has found among her own belongings. Her eyes grow perplexed as the minutes pass and her friend still stands at her post.

"What do you see, Miss Gale?" she asks at last. for she does not know what took Doris to the window.

"I see your doctor coming. Are you ready for him?"

Lenore's face brightens and colors.

"I am anxious to see him. Dr. Lemist," she says again, when he comes into the room, "I was just saying to Miss Gale that I am anxious to see you. You never came near me vesterday."

Dr. Lemist bows to them both and smiles. "I suspect it is a great waste of time for me to come to-day," he rejoins.

"Complimentary, I declare," remarks Lenore, raising her evebrows at Doris.

"Oh, socially, you are both great successes," says the doctor, taking the stethoscope from its case; "but, as invalids, I do not think much of you. Yes," he continues, when the examination is over, "you may dismiss me now. There seems to have been something magical in the treatment of these good friends."

"She is a good little person to take care of," observes Doris, kindly. "I will go down now, Lenore, and bring you something to eat." And she leaves the room.

Lenore plays with the embroidery on her wrap, and looks reproachfully at her companion. "What do you mean by 'dismissing'?" she asks. "Shall you not come to see me just the same? How else can I believe that you will continue to love me in sickness and in health?"

The doctor returns her look incredulously. He has never referred to Lenore's feverish avowals on the day of Miss Belden's death.

"Lenore, can it be possible—that you mean it?" The intensity of his tone subdues her, and she only steals her hand into his. But in another moment his arms are around her."

"Are you sure, Lenore?"

"I am sure that one of those reasons is no reason at all."

He kisses her rose-red face.

"But the other remains," she adds, resting her head against his shoulder. "The young girl that loves you is penniless."

The doctor lays her back upon the pillow, and lifts one of her hands and holds it against his cheek.

"Are you sure of that?" he asks.

"I think if there were better news, they would have told me."

"Who are they?"

"Hepsy and Miss Gale. But do not look thoughtful. Be as happy as I am."

"Lenore," he replies, tenderly, "I am happier than I have ever been in my life."

But when he goes down stairs, he asks to see Hepsy, who comes to him in the parlor.

"Lenore aint worse, is she?" she asks, quickly. The doctor turns toward her, and, seating himself, motions her to a chair near him.

"No. Lenore will be sitting up in a day or two. I want to ask you, Hepsy, if you have looked for Miss Belden's will."

"H'm! I haint looked for a will, perhaps, but if there'd been one, I guess I'd ha' found it."

"What do you mean? I have good reasons for wanting to know minutely about Miss Belden's affairs."

"Well, if you want to know any worse'n I do, you're in a bad way. I don't mind tellin' you, Dr. Lemist, adds Hepsy, confidentially, "that I've always believed the old lady was somethin' of a miser."

"Yes?"

"I know for certain that the squire didn't feel nigh so poor as his sister's always let on. She kep' his housekeepin' down pretty fine, but he had prop'ty somewheres. He used to talk about what he might do sometime to improve this place. Miss Belden said it was owin' to his weakened mind. It worried her wild to hear him go on about buildin', an' such like, an' they used to have pitched battles once in a while. She was a close one. Well I found twenty-five dollars in a stockin', locked up in her burer drawer, an' seven dollars more in a mitten in her closet; an' I don't mind tellin' you that that made me believe more 'n ever that she was a miser; an' there aint a corner o' this house that I haint hunted through, not an inch; nor a pictur' I haint looked behind, nor a

fireplace I haint searched till I was covered with sut an' ashes."

The doctor studies the carpet in grave silence.

"There was three hundred dollars in the bank here, an' that's all. Oh, I've worried about it," remarks Hepsy, resignedly. "I haint given it up easy. There was a man used to come here, Squire Belden's lawyer, an' they was awful thick together. I've felt all along that he'd know more'n anybody else about the inside o' things, an' the very day the old lady died, I sat down an' wrote him a letter, settin' out the state of affairs. He'd remember me if only the letter had got to him, but I did n't know how to send it. I just directed to 'Mr. Simeon Bascom, Lawyer, New York City.' For a while, I did think I might get an answer, but I've given it up now."

There is a silence, during which Dr. Lemist looks up at Miss Nash, and then back at the carpet. He seems about to speak to her, and then to change his mind. At length, he rises abruptly.

"I must sift this matter," he says. "It is of vital importance to me to know whether Lenore has or has not enough property to live upon."

"It's a matter of importance to all of us," says Hepsy, rising, and wondering a little.

"Especially to me because I wish to marry her."
A slow color creeps over Hepsy's face and she

looks as she feels, intensely astonished.

"Well," she remarks slowly at last, "if you're calc'latin' to marry Lenore Fayette for her money, you're agoin' to get left!"

"You would not have thought it of me, would you?" says the doctor with an abstracted smile and a sigh.

"No, I would n't!"

"I have four persons dependent upon me already, three of whom are never likely to find other support."

"Oh — you have," rejoins Hepsy, mollified. "And so, after all, it's little Lenore you want," she adds, musingly, with a shake of the head. "There'll be high jinks in this town when they know that."

"Yes, it's little Lenore I want, but when I can get her is another question."

"An' does she want you?"

"She says so."

"Well, now," and Hepsy's face beams genially, "that's good news to me. To be sure," with sudden caution, "she aint much more'n a baby; I guess you're the only man she ever knew."

"I have thought of that. Well," opening the door, "it looks as though she would have time to become certain of herself."

Hepsy keeps her own counsel, and attends to her multifarious duties as before. Lenore does not confide in her, although at first Miss Nash makes numerous little errands to her room with the idea that the girl will unburden her heart; but apparently Lenore feels no burden. She lies serenely in her place, a little smile on her lips, and is less talkative perhaps than usual. But whether Hepsy is attending to the cows, or driving about with milk, or performing any one of the household duties which she has

assumed, her thoughts are ever on the one topic that fills her spinster heart with mingled delight and anxiety. Ino receives the benefit of her opinions both complimentary and adverse, and many a time he is brought to his sitting posture and to waving conciliatory paws, at the energetic anathemas hurled by Miss Nash at "them three old maids hangin' onto Dr. Lemist an' preventin' him from takin' care o' Lenore!" For she has taken pains to discover who, what, and where, these impediments are.

One afternoon, soon after, she is expending much energy in rubbing the dining-room windows, when Miss Gale comes softly into the room and closes the door behind her. There is an expression almost of awe upon her face which at once arrests Hepsy's attention.

"I have just had a great surprise," she says.

"You look like it. Git down Ino an' give Miss Gale that chair. That dog can pick out the easiest chair in the room with his eyes blindfolded an' his hands tied behind him. What's the news, Miss Gale?"

"Lenore is engaged to Dr. Lemist."

"Yes. So he told me a few days ago, but she haint thought best to speak of it to me."

Doris is quick to detect the hurt inflection of the other's voice.

"She would not have told me," she hastens to answer, "but it came out by accident. Of course you know how trying the circumstances are."

"Yes, I do."

"Well, Lenore has determined to go away and teach."

Hepsy stops her work and stares at this.

"Oh now, that won't do."

"Indeed it does not seem best to me, but she says she has thought everything over very carefully and that her mind is quite made up. The time has come when I feel that I must leave Alderley, and I have been dreading to tell Lenore; but this afternoon I did so and she took it quite calmly because of this plan of hers. She wishes me to advertise for a position for her to teach French in a young ladies' school."

Hepsy's face is at its narrowest. "Well, if that don't beat all," she says.

"When I argued with her it came out that she had come to the conclusion principally on Dr. Lemist's account. He is a good man, I am sure, but it almost frightened me to hear her say that she is engaged to him. She is so young and inexperienced. I ventured to say so much to her; but you should have seen her face. I asked her to come with me to the city and promised that she should meet many attractive people near her own age; but she refused. She talked very beautifully. She loves Dr. Lemist devotedly."

"Sensible girl. He's the salt o' the earth. Oh, Oh," groans Hepsy, "How wrong side before things are goin'. To think o' that scrap of a girl goin' off among strangers to earn her livin'. It upsets me I declare."

"She says," continues Doris musingly, "that she does not want him to be younger or more brilliant. She says that she will wait for him ten years, twenty

years or forever, and that it will be all happiness for her because he loves her."

"That's the spirit!" exclaims Hepsy, rubbing away briskly at the window. "An' she'll stick to it. I know the stock."

This evening is the first on which Lenore is up and dressed. She and Doris are sitting together by the window in the twilight, talking quietly, when Miss Saltonstall and Mr. Burley come in. Mary has received no instructions as to admitting Mr. Burley accompanied by his cousin, and Hepsy, catching sight of the visitors, and thinking to give the young ladies a pleasant surprise, ushers them upstairs without previous announcement.

"Are you watching the moon?" inquires Mr. Burley, walking to the window to which Doris withdraws after the first greetings are said.

"Yes, we were," she replies. "While it is large and low in the sky, and the daylight scarcely gone, it is a beautiful decoration to Elmdale."

"All things conspire to decorate your home," says Alan, turning to Lenore, "now that the mistress of it is herself again."

"Yes," the girl replies, musingly, "these are days and nights to be remembered. It will probably be many a year before I see others as pleasant."

Miss Saltonstall takes a seat close by the speaker, and even takes her hand in her gloved ones. "I am afraid you will be very lonely, Miss Lenore, when you are left to Hepsy's society.

"But I shall not be left long, Miss Saltonstall. 1

have my living to get, you know, and I hope to go away and teach. Perhaps you will help me to a place," adds Lenore, appealingly.

Mr. Burley is talking to Doris, persistently, notwithstanding the short, grave answers he is receiving, and Rachel and Lenore are for all practical purposes tête-à-tête.

"My dear Miss Lenore," says the former, in the charmingly earnest and sweet voice that commands attention, "Dr. Lemist and I are the best of friends, and he has honored me with his confidence. I sympathize with you both very deeply in your quandary, but it seems to me you are premature in deciding to leave your home. Think it over a little longer, will you not? Have you talked it over with the doctor?"

"No, Miss Saltonstall, because I feel sure he could

not bring himself to consent to my going."

"You will be safer in relying upon his judgment than upon your own, Miss Lenore. I do not need to tell you that he is the soul of unselfishness. He will further whatever is for your good, regardless of himself. But if you both finally decide upon that course, I can probably help you very much in getting a position."

"How grateful I should be," murmurs Lenore. "Ah, there is Dr. Lemist, now," she adds, seeing that gentleman come in the door. He approaches and shakes hands with them all.

"This is not a professional visit, I judge, doctor," remarks Mr. Burley. "I think Miss Fayette's illness has improved her."

"Do you want to put the finishing touch to my recovery, Mr. Burley?"

"There is but one answer to that, Miss Lenore."

"Then sing to me one song. Perhaps it is the last time I shall ever hear you."

Both Rachel and Doris hope he will refuse. It is long since Rachel has suggested that he should sing. The operatic scores and the books of songs have lain untouched upon the piano at home for many days, and to Doris his voice is but a fresh trial of her strength. She keeps her face averted, sitting there by the window, the one in the room fully bathed in the radiant moonlight. Her face and figure are lent a softened loveliness. The gently moving shadows of the elm branches play over her light dress as she rests her arm on the high sill and her cheek on her hand.

Mr. Burley looks at her and receives his inspiration, and without waiting for further urging, his easy, wonderful voice floats out in Jensen's slow, dreamy song:

"Beside the window sittest thou,
Marie, thou maiden fair,
And watchest as the flow'rets bow
In evening's gentle air.
The wanderer who is passing there,
Reverently thee dost greet,
For thou, thyself, are like a prayer,
So pure, so good, so sweet.

The flow'rets gaze with rapt delight
To view thy matchless grace.
The fairest flower that greets the sight,
Is thine own lovely face.

The vesper bells the echoes wake
And send their tones to thee,
O, may no storm the flowers break,
Nor yet thy heart, Marie."

An involuntary "O, Alan!" from Rachel, and Lenore's sigh of delight are all that break the moonlit stillness when the song is ended, until Mr. Burley himself speaks.

"When are you going to send us away, Dr. Lemist?"

"Miss Fayette is her own mistress now," the doctor replies. "She must do the banishing when she feels tired."

But in spite of protestations from the convalescent the visitors soon take their departure, and Doris goes down stairs with them, leaving Dr. Lemist alone with Lenore in the hushed room. Then he takes the chair Rachel has vacated, and the girl slips her hand into his with a welcoming smile. He is silent and she suddenly becomes aware of his unresponsiveness.

"Move into the light," she says, "I wish to see your face. You are not happy," she adds, as he obeys.

"How can I be happy?" he returns, with a despairing ring in his voice. "The lovelier you are—the more I love you—the less happy I am."

"Why should you feel so. If I did not care for you that would be reason enough."

"Yes, dearest child, but indeed if you were differently situated I would bear my part of the long waiting, patiently. But it is the fact of your being so alone, and needing me as you do, that makes the bitterness of it. I spent the whole of last night in cal-

culation to see if by any possibility I could reconcile it to my conscience to urge you to marry me soon; but I must not do it. I have thought of trying to find a more lucrative field for my labors, but I dare not give up a certainty for an uncertainty with those helpless ones clinging to me. I have been selfish and cruel in seeking you, Lenore. You would not have dreamed of caring for me if I had not opened your eyes."

"Yes I should, Dr. Lemist," replies Lenore, tears in her voice.

"You hold me off by giving me my title," he says, abruptly.

"O, but I could not call you 'John'!" exclaims Lenore, aghast. "You know I could not." Then as he does not speak, she fears she may have hurt him, and again lays her hand on his. "I might say Dr. John, perhaps," she suggests timidly.

"Call me what you like, dear," he replies, gravely, his thoughts seeming to stray again.

The necessity for comforting him makes his superior age and dignity sink in importance in the eyes of his fiancée. "Do not make yourself wretched," she coaxes. "We can be happy in each other whether we ever marry or not. I have my plans all made to go away and teach, so—"

"To go away," her companion echoes, with sharp distress.

"Yes. You will see that it is better, after you have thought it over awhile. I shall advertise and find a situation, Miss Saltonstall thinks, without any trouble; and in that way we can see each other twice a year."

"Twice a year!" the ejaculation is followed by a pause; then the doctor adds, bitterly. "Ah, it is not so hard for you as I hoped—feared. You do not love me, Lenore."

Lenore turns her head away and gazes out of the window, long and silently; but the mute misery beside her moves her to be strong and patient. "I supposed you were too wise and kind for this," she replies, and then the silence falls again.

At last he breaks it. "Forgive me, my little love," he says, quietly, with his forehead bowed on the hand he is holding; then he rises. "I will try to be what you believe me, after this, and, Lenore, I want to say solemnly to you, now, before I go, that I shall never consider you bound to me. If you go away as you intend to do, you will make a new circle for yourself, and will meet many to admire you. Never for one moment hesitate on my account, to follow your own wishes. I shall give you no ring, and from this moment you are entirely free."

Lenore looks up at him with the tenderest smile. "You cannot free me, you need not try," she says. "You may not be bound, but I am."

Whatever Dr. Lemist may feel of pleasure at this assertion, he shows nothing. "I love you enough to be glad of your happiness, whether you find it with me or with another. I am afraid you have been too much excited to-night," he adds, in the same quiet tone, feeling her pulse. "No, you behave very well. I hope you will have a good night," and with this polite but prosaic wish, is moving to the door when

Lenore stretches out her hand. He comes slowly back and raises it to his lips.

"And is that formality all?" she asks, reproachfully.

He passes his hand over her forehead and lets it rest for a moment on her cheek. "Yes, dear, that is all," he says, and goes.

Lenore looks out on the moonlit elm boughs while large tears gather and roll down her face. Her attitude recalls to her mind Doris, and Mr. Burley's slow, melodious song.

"O, may no storm the flowers break, Nor yet thy heart, Marie."

"How many stories do end well I wonder," she muses. "Doris says hers may not, I know mine may not; but hearts break and people live on;" and for the first time the girl shrinks appalled, from the long succession of years which hold out to her, at best, a monotonous routine of nerve-wearing drudgery, repeating itself wearily until the freshness of her youth is worn away, and lonely old age comes on. More tears follow now thick and fast, but she brushes them away hurriedly, for she hears Doris' quick tread in the hall.

### CHAPTER XXVIII.

MISS NASH'S CORRESPONDENCE.

RACHEL," says Mrs. Saltonstall piteously, the following morning, "when are you going to be willing to leave Alderley?

Mother and daughter are sitting on the piazza, while Mr. Burley at a little distance, under the trees,

is opening and reading his mail.

"For my part," continues the elder lady, "at its very worst I have never known the place to be so deadly-lively. The atmosphere of this house would depress an undertaker. I don't know why it is, but since Doris went away you and Alan seem to vie with each other in dullness. You never play, he never sings. Indeed you seem to avoid him, and no wonder the dear boy does not find such large doses of my society exhilarating. I do not think you are well here either, my dear child," turning solicitous eyes on the other's white, set face, "and I meant to ask you why you and Dr. Lemist were closeted together so long the other day. Was it anything about your health?"

"No, mother. I am tough. Nothing interferes with my health. Dr. Lemist was in some trouble of his own that he wished to talk to me about."

"Dear me! He in trouble too? I think it is

something in the air. Don't tell me, Rachel, that Alderley has done you one particle of good, and as for me, you know how I abhor it."

"Poor little mother," returns Rachel, gently, "I will never urge you to come again; but you are mistaken, it has done me good. I have learned wonderful things in Alderley this summer."

"Ah, if you can read and study, I believe one place is as good as another to you," complains Mrs. Saltonstall, with impatience.

"Yes, mother dear, one place is as good as another. I shall never tease you again about poor, pretty Alderley. Do you know I have a plan, that I have been thinking over for several days?"

"What is it?" the question comes with sudden hopefulness.

"You heard me speak of the sketching club that is going across the water the last of this month. I have been thinking that there is no reason why we should not go with them."

"Oh, they would n't want me."

"Yes, they want me, and they know we do not separate. They will enjoy you if you will enjoy them; and I am sure you will, for they are all charming women, and you know many of them;" and Rachel enumerates several names.

"We could go with them as far as we liked," suggests Mrs. Saltonstall, hopefully. "Any excuse for a sea voyage will tempt me, you know. I should n't wonder, Rachel, if Doris would be delighted to go with us."

"We have no right to invite her," replies Rachel, quietly. "I am not a member of the club."

"Poor child! what will become of her?" muses Mrs. Saltonstall, regretfully. "I feel in a way responsible for Doris."

But the daughter does not answer.

"Alderley has done her good," continues the other, willing, in her new buoyancy, to accord some praise to her uncongenial surroundings. "She has blossomed out like a flower. But, to tell the truth, I was thoroughly relieved to have her go to Elmdale. It quite wore on me keeping a watch upon her and Alan. If there is any ground for their absurd talk about never marrying, it is far better that they should see nothing of one another. To be sure, I dare say they often meet still. Don't you think they do, Rachel?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"Alan is a changed man," pursues Mrs. Saltonstall, oracularly. "Look at him, now his face is towards us. Would n't you think he had lost his last friend? And when I addressed him this morning at breakfast, he looked right through me, and never answered at all. You laughed at me once for saying he had lost his heart to Doris. I wish I could believe that he has not."

But still Rachel does not speak, and Mr. Burley, slipping his letters into his pocket, approaches.

"Vacation is over," he announces, with a forced smile.

"How is that, dear?" asks his aunt.

"I must go away in a day or two. I am engaged

to sing in a sort of Wagnerfest, and they want me to be present at a public rehearsal."

"Well, I judge we shall not remain long after you," returns Mrs. Saltonstall, briskly. "Just as soon as we can find out what Doris intends to do, we shall be off. Rachel has a charming plan."

But Mrs. Saltonstall's sanguine tones fall on deaf ears. Mr. Burley's pale, sombre face regards his cousin's, as pale and sombre, but averted.

"Rachel, will you walk over to Elmdale with me?" he asks; and, as they set forth, Mrs. Saltonstall looks after them with a perplexed brow.

"I should like to understand what occasion there is for high tragedy," she thinks, repeating to herself Alan's invitation in the gloomy tones of his voice. "What a cheerful stroll they will have, starting off like a couple of ghosts!"

And really they are unconsciously tragical as they move along together. Rachel's immobile face and steady eyes betoken the purpose and resolve to which she has schooled herself. Reposefully she walks, knowing that her companion is but a body whose soul is not cognizant of hers.

Doris performed her task well last night. Her treatment of Mr. Burley had in it no trace of pique, no ultra coldness, which could encourage him into the belief that she was assuming. There was a cool, dry unresponsiveness in her politeness that assured him that she desired to point out his presumption; a finality in the sphere of her indifference, which would utterly destroy the germs of hope in a less sanguine

lover, and which produces in Alan, as he ponders upon her behavior, a sickening apprehension. But he will not go without speaking, without learning the worst from the girl's own lips, and so, white and stern without, and feverishly restless within, he strides along beside the woman who longs for nothing now so much as escape from the daily sight of his face. Only once is the silence broken between them. Alan, suddenly self-convicted of discourtesy, speaks:

"Well, Rachel, we are not very talkative."

"No," she assents, passively.

"You would forgive me if you knew all that is on my mind, but, thank heaven," with a sudden burst of affection, "you are such a sensible woman, one does not need to be forever in fear of hurting you."

"That is fortunate, too," she returns with a smile that is very sad to see, but Mr. Burley does not see it. Then they relapse into silence, and turn into the gate at Elmdale without a word.

A form suddenly darts out in front of them. It is Hepsy Nash. She is evidently wildly excited, and her face colors high at sight of the visitors. In contrast to her alert, expectant air, is the resigned and dejected mien of Ino, who stands near on three legs, his left fore paw being held up, swathed in a cotton bandage.

"Well, if this aint luck!" she exclaims. "As sure as you're born, Miss Saltonstall, I've got a letter here from Squire Belden's lawyer what I wrote to the day Miss Belden died. I'd given it up. I did n't believe he got it, and O, now, Miss Saltonstall, I'm afraid to read it. Whatever's in that letter 'll tell whether lit

tle Lenore can stay in her home surrounded with respect an' love, or whether she must go out among strangers an' earn her livin' where no one knows or cares for her. An' she's had hard lines, little Lenore has, an' my heart has hammered so ever since I got this out o' the office a few minutes ago that I just havn't got strength to open it."

The woman's earnestness carries these two by storm. For the moment Lenore's fate is all in all to them as well as to Hepsy. Rachel takes the letter.

"Shall I open it?" she asks, in her soothing voice.

"Yes, yes," answers Miss Nash, turning on her heel and looking down at her little shadow, who meets her look with one full of questioning, as he lifts his bandaged foot still higher.

"Oh, don't we hope, Ino, don't we hope?" she murmurs.

"Ow!" responds the terrier, which brief remark may mean concurrence, or a gentle reminder of his own woes. Hepsy takes it in the latter sense.

"What's a splinter in your foot! That's just nothin' at all. O, my heart!" and she turns cautiously around and studies Miss Saltonstall's face.

The latter's eyes travel quickly down the page.

She nods her head. "Hepsy," she says, quietly, "I think all is as you wish."

"Glory be! Glory be!" cries the other, with wild and joyful gestures. "Both o' you come along with me," she continues, volubly. "Lenore's settin' in the parlor to-day. How'll we ever tell her without makin' ther sick? I'd ought to be put in a strait jacket myself. Don't get under foot, Ino," for the terrier, infected by his mistress' excitement, has abandoned his downcast air and is doing all a three-legged dog can do to honor the occasion by agility and noise; and so they straggle up to the house, Ino being first to rush into the parlor where Lenore sits reading, and where he becomes suddenly and ostentatiously disabled in remembrance of the candy with which the girl rewarded him this morning at the close of the slight operation performed upon his foot. Lenore rises at sight of her guests.

"There aint anythin' the matter, Lenore," remarks Miss Nash in a suffocated voice, which, taken in connection with her sparkling eyes and reddened countenance, causes the convalescent to turn a little pale.

"I've had a letter from your grandpa's lawyer, that's all, dearie. Don't you be a mite scared."

"There is good news in it for you, Miss Lenore," adds Miss Saltonstall, kindly, while Mr. Burley takes in the fact that Doris is not in the room. "Shall I read it to you?"

"Yes, please," murmurs Lenore, bewildered, and Rachel sitting down close beside her, complies.

"Miss Nash: Madam.—Your letter has reached me after some delay. I should not have been here to receive it, but for the fact that a sharp attack of illness prevented my presenting myself in Alderley immediately after the news of Miss Belden's death. As you surmised, her brother made me his confidant, and the late Miss Belden was to have applied to me whenever she was in need of funds. She has never done so, but however well provided she may have left her grand-niece, I presume Miss Fayette will be glad to receive the portion which her

grandfather designed for her—property in all amounting to something over fifteen thousand dollars. This my late friend wished given to her as soon as his sister should depart this life, and not before. I shall be in Alderley to pay my compliments to the young lady nearly as soon as this letter reaches you.

Yours, &c., Simeon Bascom.

"Lenore, do you want a drink of water, or anything?" asks Hepsy, herself gasping with excitement.

"Not at all," replies Lenore, serenely. "I only want Dr. Lemist."

"And you will have him," says Rachel, "for he is this minute driving up."

"Shake hands, Hepsy," says Lenore, rising, and kissing the faithful woman's cheek, after which Miss Nash draws the back of her hand across her eyes and rushes out into the kitchen, there to execute an awkward, skipping dance, which so works upon Ino's feelings that his repeated barks degenerate into one prolonged, inarticulate howl.

"I will go upstairs and find Doris," says Rachel, as the doctor stops at the door.

"She is not there," returns Lenore. "She is in my garden."

"I will find her," remarks Mr. Burley.

"Well," assents Rachel, quietly. "I will be here when you are ready to go," and she moves up the stairs.

Lenore, as Dr. Lemist comes across the piazza, throws open the front door and stands before him, smiling triumphantly. He does not expect to see her, and she looks so pretty and young in her white dress, the very one in which he found her on the day of the

picnic, that he takes her impulsively in his arms and kisses her cheek.

"How good it is to see you down here, looking so well," he says, in deprecation of the act.

"Of course it is, and now you are going to stay and make a long visit," she returns, leading him into the parlor.

"No — I — I didn't come to see you to-day, Lenore — that is, I hoped, of course, that I should see you, but I came to get a book that Miss Gale promised me."

"Then do you wish me to go and send Doris to you?" asks Lenore, unable to stop smiling as she looks at him.

"Why, —I don't know what to say or do! That's the fact, Lenore," he exclaims, miserably, turning away from her, and walking over to the mantel-piece.

Lenore follows him, clasps both her hands around his arm, and laying her cheek against his shoulder, casts her eyes up at him in a manner wholly ruinous to his peace of mind.

"You dear little girl. You do love me, I believe," he says, trying to smile.

"You do believe it at last? Well, that is a comfort. I suppose we shall be married in this room. Where will it be nicest to stand?" and Lenore leads her captive about, pausing in each possible location. "Yes, here before the mirror will be best; why do you not speak and say something?"

"You make me very happy, merely by talking about such a possibility," he replies with an attempt at cheerfulness.

"I will make you happier yet," Lenore says, swinging slightly back and forth on his arm. "I have decided not to go away and be a teacher."

"That is good. We shall manage it in some less cruel way than that."

She answers very softly. "Ah yes, Dr. John, my way is not cruel at all."

He looks at her as the tender, slow-spoken words fall from her lips.

"Lenore, you are keeping something from me!" he exclaims. "It is not bad news, it is good. Something that makes you happy, dearest!"

"It is only that I have fifteen thousand dollars!" she exclaims radiantly, breaking from him and running across the room for the letter which she opens before the doctor's amazed, enraptured vision, chattering the explanation of it all meanwhile.

"Well — cannot you speak yet?" she says, at last, for he seems stunned by the news.

He looks at her with a joy too deep for expression-"I can, my darling," he answers. "Heaven be praised!"

## CHAPTER XXIX.

#### BOTH SIDES OF A STORY.

DOWN the piazza steps and across the lawn Mr. Burley walks, to Lenore's garden. Before he reaches the spot he can see Doris stooping before the geranium bed, surrounded by flower pots into which she is carefully transferring certain of the plants. The day is sultry and the sky preparing for rain, and in the shadow of the clouds the girl has thrown off her hat. Alan prefers to hasten to his doom, and there is no lingering after he perceives the golden head. With half a dozen strides he is beside her. She pauses and looks up with the trowel deep in earth, the grave, intense expression of his face holding her silent. The little brook steals darkly by and its murmur is all of sound for a long moment, then Mr. Burley speaks.

"I am going away," he says, shortly. "I have come to say good-bye."

Doris draws off her gloves and drops them, rising slowly, with a confused idea that it is the fragrance of the strong green leaves that makes her suddenly faint. The color her work has brought into her cheeks deserts them. She struggles for her self-possession. She is cruelly unprepared.

"Oh, you are going?" she says quietly.

"Yes, I am going." He studies her face with solemn, eager eyes that long to read the secret of her soul. "Say that you regret that our summer is over."

"Why should I say that?" Doris replies, her lips whitening but her downcast face composed. "It has been very pleasant, but other summers will come."

"Even this may not be ended," he persists, speaking in a tense repressed way. I may come back. It depends upon you to say."

It depends upon her to say! Her lips part and the breath comes through them with difficulty. She wavers in her sore temptation.

"Do not come back for me," she manages to return, unsteadily. "I shall not be here."

He looks at her for one last moment of waiting, and takes a sudden step toward her.

"Then I must speak now. It is impossible for me to go without saying it, Doris. I love you. I know you have given me no reason to think you would listen to me and that perhaps I am destroying a happy friendship, but I must speak. I love you." He makes the repetition with more intensity. He takes her hand, then her arm, and draws her to him. She yields like one under a spell.

"Tell me you love me. Say it once, Doris!"

"I do love you," she breathes, her eyes on his.

But, as his lips touch hers, she wrenches herself away from him, her face changing with sudden terror.

"What did I say! I did not mean it!" she cries

"My darling-"

"Hush! Do not speak to me. Do not look at me," she exclaims, frantically. "I have no right—I am —I am married!" and, with a sudden turn, she runs fleetly toward the house.

Rachel has gone to Doris' room, and sat down to wait, with passively folded hands. Below stairs is one pair of lovers, who want no one but each other. Out of doors is another absorbed pair, whose interview she might trespass upon should she leave the house. Here she can be out of the way, and wait their pleasure. Hers is not an inspiriting part to play, but it has been assigned to her, and Rachel Saltonstall believes so fully in the One who knows every struggle, sacrifice, and temptation of her heart, that she will fulfil it conscientiously until one less humble

is given her, even if it should be to the end of her life. She prepares herself for a tedious season of waiting; but it seems only a short time before the door opens, and Doris, or the ghost of Doris, walks in. Her face is so changed that Rachel starts to her feet, and murmurs an apology for her presence, while her thoughts fly rapidly. Of course Miss Gale has refused Mr. Burley; and with this conviction comes a warmth of surprised admiration for the girl's consistency. Rachel has of late naturally doubted the reality of Doris' asseverations, and now they are vindicated beyond question by the dumb, hopeless misery of her heavy glance.

"No, don't go, Miss Rachel," she says, monotonously. "I did not know you were here, but I wanted to see you before I went away. You asked me once

for my confidence. Have you time now to listen to me? If so, I will tell you the shameful secret that I carry in my heart, and sometime you will tell—Mr. Burley."

"Yes, Doris," replies Rachel, drawing the girl to a seat beside her, every selfish sorrow forgotten. "Tell

me, dear, everything you will."

"You will not call me 'dear' when I have done," says the other with a long, solemn look into her friend's eyes. "You will despise me, as I despise myself; but I wish you to know. You have heard the story of Miss Lockett's first fancy for me. She conceived the idea of living her life over again through me. Her great regret was that she had never married. In spite of her wealth, hers had been a lonely, unhappy life. She thought to save me from making a similar mistake by leaving me her money provided that I should be married by the time I was twentyone. Before this idea took possession of her, she had intended to leave her fortune to different charities, but principally to the hospital in which Dr. Reid was interested. He was appointed my guardian, and, in case I failed to fulfil the wish of my benefactress, the money was to revert to his hospital. Miss Lockett expected to be alive to see my marriage accomplished; but a malignant fever seized her, and she died when I was but eighteen. My mother was an invalid. We had always been poor, so it is little wonder, young, careless girl that I was, that I paid very little attention to the condition Miss Lockett had affixed to her will. We removed, by Dr. Reid's advice, to New

York, where I had the happiness of seeing my delicate mother surrounded by every luxury, and I, myself, had every advantage. In one year my mother died. When I had finished school, I staid with one and another of my friends for a time, while my twenty-first birthday drew on apace. The weeks and months seemed to fly by, such was my dread of its arrival. I had several proposals of marriage, but I loved no one, and was often disgusted by advances which I knew were made to the money that began to be a heavy burden. Nevertheless, I clung to it tenaciously. I loved the things money brought. Dr. Reid had many kind talks with me, and urged me strongly to accept the suit of a certain unexceptionable parti; but I could not. He lavished upon me all the love he would have given to children of his own had he had them, and he was as anxious as myself that I should keep the fortune, and vexed himself night and day to find a way for me out of my quandary. At last he found one, and came to me with it. He told me that, as it never rained but it poured, the hospital had received another bequest, and was then in no need of money; therefore it would be but justice for it to be the means of securing the fortune to me. In short, there was a respectable young man at the hospital, whose life was given up. He was aware that he could live but a few days, and was willing to do a lady a last favor before leaving the world. My friends, the Vances, were to sail for Europe on the following day. Would I marry this man-Dr. Reid was clever enough not to name him, for, by particularizing at all, he knew he should frighten me out of consenting—and go with them? This idea, while it shocked me, filled me with eagerness. I had been so harassed; the escape was so simple; still I hesitated for some time. The doctor had evidently given the plan much thought, and perfected it minutely. He made it very attractive. He smoothed away every objection. The affair should be entirely secret, so far as my friends were concerned. I might even retain my maiden name. He would make everything right with Miss Lockett's lawyers. Ah well, no need to go into detail. I consented. Of course, every moment until the time appointed for the ceremony was more than full. I had no time for thought, and I wished for none.

"At last, the hour came. I drove to the hospital, and was shown to a reception-room to wait for Dr. Reid. I shall never forget it. I tried to look upon this visit merely as an indispensable matter of business, to be gone through with before I could be my own mistress, free to go abroad and travel, as I had so often dreamed of doing; but, for all my reasoning, I trembled all over with undefined dread and excitement; and when Dr. Reid appeared in the doorway, I would have begged to withdraw now had I dared, but this serious, formal physician was not the indulgent friend who had petted me so many years, and in an awed silence I rose and followed him obediently.

I was ushered into a neat room with shaded windows. A clergyman was standing beside the bed, and a pallid face lay against the pillow; but I hardly

looked at it. Dr. Reid told me afterward that the minister supposed himself to be uniting two devoted lovers, and that this was not the first death-bed wedding at which he had officiated.

"I do not remember the service. My ears rang, and things swam before my eyes. I kept saying to myself -you are counting upon this man's death. You would not have him live if he could. Ah, it was all infinitely horrible. The poor creature slipped a ring on my finger; his cold touch made me shudder. I do not think I fainted, but Dr. Reid had to support me down stairs to the carriage which was to drive me directly to the steamer. He was very kind to me. I told him my eyes were open to the sacrilegious thing I had done. He comforted me and asked if I did not wish to know the name I bore. I begged him not to tell me yet. I pulled off my ring and gave it to him. He saw how I suffered and he was very forbearing. Miss Rachel," Doris adds, catching her breath, "the only happiness I have had since that day has seemed to me stolen. In the very hour that I degraded myself so meanly I sailed for Europe, and I heard from Dr. Reid but once afterward. He wrote me one tenderly kind letter a few days after I left, saying that contrary to his certain expectations the—patient was still alive. promised to write again the following day, but no to-morrow came for him, and I was left in the terrible uncertainty that has haunted me night and day. Ever since my return I have been trying to muster courage to inquire whether the man-what became of him!"

Miss Saltonstall smoothes the bowed head, and

speaks promptly, in a tone of conviction. "Then that is the next step, Doris. It is due to Mr. Burley—"

"Hush! I could not marry him!" exclaims the girl, sobbing as though her heart were broken. "I can never go through the marriage service again. I am not fit. But I will know whether that man is alive," she adds, rising, and walking the floor excitedly. "I will endure this no longer. I will go immediately—this very night."

"I will go with you."

"You will! how can I thank you!"

There is a step outside in the hall, a rap on the door, and Hepsy calls.

"Miss Saltonstall, Mr. Burley is waitin' to speak to you in the study."

Rachel moves to the door, and Doris distractedly holds out her hands toward her.

"Tell him—" she begins, piteously, then adds, resuming her walk—"nothing."

It is a quarter of an hour before Miss Saltonstall returns and finds Doris still continuing her promenade, dry-eyed and wrapped in miserable thought. Rachel is white and trembling.

"He wants to see you," she says, her voice unsteady.

"I can not see him."

"But you must, Doris. He bade me tell you, if you refused, that he has a message for you from—the man we have been speaking of."

A great terror comes over Doris' face, and she throws her hands up to the masses of hair that are falling over her neck.

"Don't fear, dear. It will be made right. Go down to him. Let me help you a little. Your hair—" but Doris does not heed. She goes swiftly out and down the stairs.

Miss Saltonstall, left alone, falls on her knees beside the bed, and bows her head on her crossed arms.

Alan Burley, waiting in the little room below, has his eyes fixed on the door as it swings open and Doris appears, her eyes shining like stars in her white face, and her wonderful hair falling over her shoulders.

"You sent for me!" she exclaims, almost in a whisper, closing the door behind her, softly. "You know of him. He is alive. You have known all this time and have not told me. It was kindness, perhaps, but cruel kindness. Now let me hear the worst."

Alan comes to her and tries to take her hands, but she repels him.

"Doris. Do you not guess, my dearest love? Will you forgive me the deceit, if deceit it is. It was your own wedding ring that you dropped into the lake, my darling, and so buried the past and left us free to begin anew. Look up at me as you did in the garden," he adds, drawing her to him, the shining masses of her hair falling over his arm. "Tell me again that you love me. I am your husband."

Doris does not faint nor cry out. She lies passively in his embrace with her eyes fixed intently upon his. Slowly comes the reaction from her wretchedness. Slowly she comprehends this assertion which at first

aningless on her ears.

"You—you, my husband! O I am dreaming!" she says, in a hushed voice.

"Then we are both dreaming, Doris, and we will never wake."

She still looks at him with rapt attention.

- "And you have known it—all the time? I must think it over to realize—to understand."
- "Do not try to realize anything but that we love one another."
  - "And that I am free!"
  - "And not free."
- "It can not be—possible," she continues, "I must do something, give up something."
  - "Anything you like, my darling, but me."
- "Ah, that is what it ought to be. I ought to give up—you."
- "It will make you a great deal of trouble. I shall not let you go, easily; beside do you not owe something to me as well as to your own conscience?"
  - "Oh, I do," she sighs.
- "My wife! How often in the past month I have looked at you and said the precious name to myself. My wife," repeats Alan, smiling into her clear eyes. "You have not treated me well in the past. Will you marry me once more, and do better?"

Doris lets her cheek drop down against his breast and lifts her hand from his arm to his shoulder.

"I should not think you could trust me," she says.

# CHAPTER XXX.

#### CONCLUSION.

IDSUMMER. A still, breathless heat in the village which makes escape to the mountain drive very grateful.

Hepsy lets Tim take his own leisurely time up the hill this afternoon. She is in no hurry. It seems to her that she has never come to a spot in her life so peaceful as this. No more hurry, no more worry, no more planning, no more anxiety, her serene face seems to say.

"An' I think I deserve a breathin' spell, Ino," she remarks to her companion, who lies at ease on the seat beside her and raises a very open countenance at her words.

"Yes, things have piled up rather fast," she continues, looking absently at the double row of white teeth, lolling, red tongue, and quickly panting side. "First there was Miss Belden's goin' to her reward. Then Mr. Bascom's letter, and Lenore's happiness. Then the engagement o' that other couple that was so plainly made for each other, that I don't see an' never shall see why Mrs. Saltonstall was so flustrated about it. She was tickled, though, so tickled she didn't hardly know what to do with herself. Seemed 's if she'd give up goin' to Europe at first, but when she

an' Mr. Burley had both done their best to get Miss Gale to consent to be married right off an' she would n't do it, why I s'pose she thought she might as well go. No sir," and Hepsy shakes her head gravely. "That girl insisted on a good six months' engagement an' they had to give in. There aint nothin' to prevent her havin' all the formality she wants about her marriage. It's different with Lenore, she's got a big house to take care of, an' she can't live alone. No wonder Mr. Burley's so happy. Well he may be. That handsome critter's just wrapped up in the thought of him. You an' I, Ino, had ought to like Miss Gale if anybody does. I can see as far into a millstone as the next person. Then came Mr. Bascom's visit an' the transfer o' the prop'ty. Then Miss Saltonstall an' her mother settin' out for Europe an' Mr. Burley goin' off singin' - to earn his bread an' butter he said. Humph! I guess Miss Gale can afford to buy all the bread an' butter he can eat. Then Miss Gale herself stayin' on at Elmdale an' helpin' us through. Whatever we should a done if she had n't I don't know. Such another whirl an' hurry I hope never to see again; but it's done, an' well done, and there wan't ever a bride in Alderley had a better outfit than our little Lenore has to-day; nor you would n't a thought, Ino, would you, when you seen them presents - silver an' glass an' pictures an' things, that most all the folks that sent 'em had had some spiteful thing to say about the woman they praise up so, now. Bless you, Ino, by the time the honeymoon's over they'll forget

themselves that they naint always admired Mrs. Dr. Lemist," and Hepsy's happy face grows retrospective. Many a time she will live over the simple, pretty wedding in her mind - the wedding which Dr. Lemist would not have postponed on account of Miss Belden's. death. She will see the guests in festal array, conspicuous among them Miss Fortune, beaming delight in every feature, see every eye turning on the little bride at first very spirituelle in her excitement and floating, cloud-like raiment, with a daring, loving cluster of vivid geraniums in her breast, and then in her traveling costume, joyous, talkative, vivacious, taking her departure amidst showers of good wishes into which an ill-assorted pair of old slippers come tumbling, one the property of Hepsy, the other of Miss Fortune. Dr. Lemist's composed, serene countenance is Hepsy's last remembrance, for tears welled out of her eyes as the carriage drove away. She will recall the contained, quiet look of happiness in Doris' face when the guests had departed and they two were giving a few last touches to the rooms before locking up the house for the two weeks' absence of the bridal couple. The picture of the blonde child in the parlor looked down on a mantel banked high with graduated rows of scarlet flowers, festooned below with green vines. Baskets and vases of the blossoms stood everywhere. Hepsy remarked that you might "go over Alderley to all intents and purposes with a rake, an' you would n't find a red geranium short of Elmdale."

She will also remember complacently that Ino comported himself throughout with propriety. Only once

did he beg for anything. The frosting on the wedding cake attracted him cruelly. In spite of frowns he would sit up when he caught sight of a piece of it in Hepsy's hand. It was the bride's fault. She had initiated him into the delights of frosting during the day. He waved his paws vehemently. His fresh ribbon bow worked around under his ear. He cried "Ow!" in his tersest style, thereby covering his mistress with confusion. She turned her back upon him, laid down her piece of cake precipitately, and reaching out a surreptitious foot gently pushed him over while speaking with dignity to one of the guests. But except for this trifling breach of decorum all has gone smoothly, and Hepsy and Doris have parted, with cordial good wishes on both sides. Miss Gale is going immediately to a cool spot in the mountains where Dr. and Mrs. Lemist are to meet her in a week's time, after Lenore has been presented to the three maiden aunts; and Elmdale is left with a hush upon it full of expectancy to Hepsy. She paints glowing, cheerful pictures of its future and sees the long reign of cant and narrowness and gloom succeeded by love and light and happiness for all those who come within its precincts.

Arrived at the farm, Hepsy dismounts from the wagon, carefully protecting her black silk dress from the wheel. It is a very glossy silk in a perfect state of repair and has been her best for seven years. Its skirt is full, its shoulders long and its sleeves generous, and her hat is black, embellished with a green ribbon.

"It's a good thing, Ino," she remarks, serenely,

looking with an affectionate glance down over the sweet summer landscape, "that we have a 'resort' to go to as well as the rest. It's cool enough here for us, aint it?"

Ino stands beside her looking up expectantly while Tim walks on toward the barn. He is only a fond, faithful little dog without imagination and in a hurry for his supper; but as his intense gaze rests on the kind, preoccupied eyes it is easy to believe that he is dwelling upon the goodness which overflows upon many another beside himself, and upon the contrast between his mistress' hard-featured, brusque-mannered body, and her lovely soul.

"O honest face which all men knew!
O tender heart but known to few!"



